

A SON OF THE AGES

A SON OF THE AGES

THE REINCARNATIONS AND
ADVENTURES OF SCAR,
THE LINK

A story of Man from the Beginning

BY
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Illustrated by Craig Johns

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INTRODUCTION

A WASTE of waters heaved sullenly beneath a dismal canopy. Thin, slimy masses floated here and there about the shallows of a little cove or clung to its sodden beach. The cove led into a bay, which opened, in its turn, upon a vast and soundless sea. But a single reach of land, gray, flat, and lifeless and encircling partially the cove, was all of earth there was in sight.

Close above and all about the huge and silent mystery and extending outward far into space, was a steaming world of vapour, condensed into enormous clouds beyond, an enshrouding curtain over all beneath. And ever this was smitten fiercely by the distant sun, whose rays could not yet fairly pierce the tremendous depths, yet shone through wanly here and there upon the sombre scheme, sombre in its awful lifelessness and silence, but with a promise, indefinable and yet assured, of life and light to come in the tremendous future.

And eons followed eons. Man had not yet measured time. The dateless ages passed. The vibrating waves of light, of heat, of electricity, of magnetism, the forces of attraction and repulsion, all the agencies and mysteries of nature's law, laboured ceaselessly within and without the forming world, making for life. The dense exuding vapour became a warm yet ever present mist, through which the sun's rays drove or filtered and reached the

earth abundantly. The world had shrunken, yet the outlines of the bay, and even of the little cove, were there, though otherwise the scene had changed. The floating protoplasmic fragments had developed into a higher and far-extended life. No longer lay the waters flat and motionless; no longer was the land a dead and drear expanse. There were waves upon the seas and movements showing life there, and the land was green with an infant vegetation.

And the new planet rolled through its allotted orbit while upon it were wrought the endless processes of growth and transformation. The constellations of the heavens slowly changed and shifted into the forms and places which were in coming ages to be marked and named by the sons of earth. Suns flamed and faded while this globe strained toward its prime. Life advanced with an overwhelming rush. There might be check but never pause to the plunging growth from the primal cells which had floated by the sea until they had developed a looming vegetation and almost brainless monsters in that lush and growing time.

The warm waters teemed with the myriads of life. Strange creatures swarmed the seas devouringly or nosed and hunted along the shores, and others of other forms ranged and floundered and fought in the depths and glades of the gigantic fernlike forests. It was a time of heat and moisture and of fierce development, terrible, vast, imposing.

The time, uncounted, yet brought relentlessly its transmutations. The mottled, changing ages still trod upon each other's heels, and reaction and condensation came

into even the law of life. The warm seas became in area, though not in place, much as they are to-day. On land, the vast fernlike forests lay buried deep beneath the covering surface made by another and different vegetation. The reptilian monsters of the sea and land had almost gone, and in their place ranged the great creatures of another sort and type, as well of more timid life, the grass-eaters, upon whose bodies fed the savage beasts of the new epoch. At night the leaves rustled beneath the tread of murderous things; the air resounded with the roar of the great cave tiger, the growl of the cave bear or the cries and snarls of hyenas and the yelpings of the wolf packs. The green plains were dotted with herds of little wild horses, the aurochs, the urus, the ancient elk, and a host of other grazing things; wild hogs were in the thickets. All was life, as before, but life of another kind, one of pursuers and pursued, fierce, strenuous, bloody, but with more to the brute intelligence.

There were vast upheavals and fiery rendings, but life insisted, persisted. Gnawed by tooth of glacier, seamed and ridged by abysses and upheavals, the planet reeled through space. Life, animal and vegetable, retreated or advanced as Nature played or laboured with the crust she was fashioning and refashioning into its present shape, even as she still makes and unmakes continents or islands or blots them out at her will.

But life went on. New creatures, tree-climbing, ape-creatures had developed from one of the lower stems of the dim past and had become distinct from all other living things. Without expression, save by scream or roar or chuckle, helpless, as yet, as against the dangerous

beasts, they still developed, and one group among them, by some mysterious happening, outstripped the rest. Of all the creatures, those tree-climbers, far from the strongest, possessing not greatly more than instinct, were yet the most perceptive. Mind was in growth, slowly, uncertainly, but still in growth. Reason fluttered within dull brains ; the climbers could think a little. Nature had begun upon her Masterpiece!

A SON OF THE AGES

CHAPTER I

THE LINK

I HAD broken my thumb. It was a long fall and not only was my thumb broken, but the fingers on the same hand were crushed backward and so sprained that they were useless, and when I tried to climb the tree again, to renew the fight, I could not. I do not know what made me slip and fall, for there were few among the treetop people more certain upon a limb than I. But that upon which I had stood was old and it may be that the one to which I clung was rotten, and so I fell, though I was gripping the other hardly with the fingers of both my feet.

The Brown One — I call him that now, to distinguish him, though we had no names — was a strong creature, the biggest ape in all the forest, but it could not have been possible for him to throw me from the limb, even when its slighter upstanding branch which I was clutching with one hand proved weak and faithless as I lurched and slid. I should have clung easily with my other hands — those I now call my feet — and up-twisted myself and grappled him about the legs. Yes, it must be that the bark came away. That was why I fell far, head downward, with arms outreaching to break my fall, and that, so, my thumb was broken and my fingers on one hand bent backward and sprained into hurting uselessness.

It had been the start of a good fight. It was all be-

cause of It, as I will call her, the she thing who was the child of an old pair who had a nest in the fork of the tree with the noisy leaves. We both wanted her, the Brown One and I, and so we fought for her on the big limb while she screamed shrilly in the branches above, and her father and mother crouched chattering together in the nest of sticks and leaves in the great crotch of the tree. He was very old, the father of It, and could no longer climb well for either fruit or nuts. He was forced to eat such ripened things as fell to the ground, and the grasshoppers and the little creatures which came out of holes. But he was most crafty and still could climb the tree with an effort, and so continued to live. He was not quick, though, and, some day, one of the hungry, growling creatures of the forest must catch him on the ground and that, it seemed, must be the end of him.

My own tree, with its nest, was in an open glade of the wood, by the river, not very distant from the tree of the Old One of whom I have told, and before this time I could have taken It, had I but known, for she was full grown, as was I, and once when I had met her in a tree-top we had chattered together and she had not appeared to be afraid. I gave her fruit, and she ate. I could have taken her with me then. I wonder why I did not?

Then, days later, I went howling through the treetops toward the home of the father of It, for the hunger for companionship had grown upon me. My own kith and kin were dead and I was grown big and strong and I wanted this one she thing to be mine and in the nest with me.

It was a very good nest. I had made it carefully and

solidly with sticks laid across and interwoven with tough withes where big limbs joined the tree trunk until they were quite a platform with a deep hollow in the middle, and I had brought twigs and leaves to cushion the hollow, in which I could curl myself down and sleep most comfortably, far out of the reach of prowling beasts which came beneath at night. The tree stood alone in the glade, and this was good, for no creature could reach its top save by coming up its trunk. All we feared in the top of a tree which stood by itself, was the rare great serpent, which could climb and could even pass from one tree to another, though not so swiftly as we. But, sometimes, he would surprise one of us asleep, and what happened then was something of which I do not care to tell.

So, my nest was a fine one and the tree was near a great river and in a wood in which were fruit and nuts and many birds and where the roots of weeds in the ground were sweet and tender, and where the wild ducks and geese laid eggs in nests by the water, where all about were many things to eat. But the she thing hunger came upon me and I wanted It. I went through the forest to get her.

I scrambled on all fours from the trunk of my own tree and from the glade and so up into the treetops and swung from limb to limb toward the house of the Old One, where I could find my mate. As I neared the place I checked myself, clinging to a limb and listening, for I had heard from afar that which I did not like. There came from where stood the tree of the Old One sounds which told their story well. There was a combined roaring and whimpering and squalling, and I knew that the squalling

came from It. I could not tell where was the roaring. I was in the tree itself before I learned. It was the big Brown One who was roaring in anger because he was baffled in what he sought. My It stood upon a limb of the tree, clinging to a branch beside her, while he clutched another and strove to tear her away. In the nest the Old One and his mate were crouching whimperingly. The Old One could not fight. He was too weak.

I was strong, very strong. Once when the dun jackal — the half-wolf thing which follows the big tiger and bear and leopard and gnaws the red bones after they have killed and eaten, went mad, as he sometimes does, fearing nothing, though a coward at other times — sprang at me when I was on the ground, I caught him by the throat as he leaped and, with the other hand gripped on him, tore away one of his forelegs, shoulder and all, clear from his body. He raged no more, and it was good for all of the creatures of the forest, since all feared him when he went mad. Yes, I was strong, but I was not stronger than the Brown One. I did not know that yet.

The rage which came upon me when I saw the Brown One trying to carry away the she thing I wanted is something of which I do not know how to tell. I would have her myself and I would kill him! I roared and bellowed, and clambered downward until I dropped upon the limb whereon he and It were struggling. He turned in a second and came snarlingly toward me, while It, still squalling for a moment, then chattering wildly, fled upward among the branches and then into another tree and so out of sight deep into the forest. We were alone to fight it out.

We did not wait. His eyes were flaming and his teeth shone white and whetting as he swung toward me, and we met each with one hand grasping the nearest branch for support and the other free with which to fence and clutch and tear. I caught him fairly by the skin on the back of his neck, at last, and pulled his head toward me and with my teeth tore away one ear and a strip of skin and flesh, though he bit me deeply and tore me on the shoulder. I should have rent at his neck and killed him before he could have hurt me had all gone as it should have done. But the slight limb clutched by my supporting hand broke at its base and I was swirled off and hanging by my unprotected feet. In an instant he was down upon the limb, biting and tearing at them. They were slipping and I could not lift myself and it was beyond endurance. My grip relaxed in agony and I fell far to the ground — fell to tear a deep gash in my face from eye to jaw, to leave a ghastly, lasting scar, to crush my arms beneath me and lie there stunned and with the fingers of one hand helpless, as I have told, and the thumb so broken that it lay flat and distorted across the palm of my hand.

The Brown One did not come down to finish me. He scarcely looked at me. He clambered higher up the tree and leaped into the next one and was off into the forest crying out triumphantly. He was in the chase of It.

I lay helpless for a long time. The Old One and his mate paid no attention to me, but crouched there, frightened and gibbering foolishly in their nest. At last I tried to rise, and got to my feet with many liftings and stood by a little tree, supporting myself with my uninjured hand.

Then it came to me that I must get back to my own tree and nest at once, and I tried to climb, so that I might travel through the treetops, but I could not do it. My injured hand was still so weak and lame that I could not use the fingers. The blood flowed through the great gash in my cheek. But I must get to my own tree, somehow, else I might be killed. I started on my hind legs, bending and supporting myself by my well arm and hand, but it was not easy, for I was sorely bruised and, though all of my kind walked sometimes upright, or even ran for a distance leapingly, it was not our common mode of travel. Through the treetops we could pass most easily and swiftly. I do not know why it was, but I think that I had somehow acquired the habit of walking erect more frequently than any other ape I knew, though forelegs and clasping feet — or arms and hands as I call them now — were sure and the treetops were a splendid highway, while upon the ground it was rarely safe.

I reached my tree at last, almost crawling, and weak and sore, and tried again to climb, but it was useless. I could not grasp the trunk and lift myself, though at other times it had been but play to clamber up to where the great limbs and my nest were. I became afraid. Any of the fierce beasts of the night might find me lying there and kill and eat me. I crawled to the shore of the river and crouched beside it and let my maimed hand dangle in the cold water. That seemed to make the pain less. Then the darkness came, and with it I was more afraid. I crawled to where there uprose a mighty heap of tumbled, broken rocks and wedged myself in one of the deep, narrow hollows, where I could not well be seen from the outside,

and where none of the great devouring things could reach me save the big serpent and, it might be, the slender leopard. A bear came smelling about and growled in his hunger, but the passage between the rocks was too narrow for his huge bulk. Finally, tired and suffering, I went to sleep.

I must have been near to death from exhaustion, for when I awoke the sun was shining and the birds were singing. There were many birds. The prowling night things must have gone away, I knew, and I crept out into the light and stretched myself. I was very sore, but my hand did not pain me so much, and, after I had drunk deeply and held my hand in the water again, I felt a little of my strength come back. I started slowly toward my tree and on my way found berries, which I ate. I tried to climb the tree again, but failed at first. I waited and then I growled and crunched my teeth together and forced myself to use the fingers of my injured hand, though it hurt sickeningly, and gained my nest at last. I was safe, but I could not rest nor lie still in my refuge. My broken thumb was throbbing and full of pain. It still lay crushed across my palm and was swollen and distorted. I licked it carefully and tried to press it back into its place, but it would not go. I sat upright in my nest and was afraid and suffering and weak — I, who had been so strong!

My ears were strained for any sound. There was little to fear, for only the great snake or the Brown One, should he seek me, could harm me where I was. But all the time I listened, and it seemed to me that there were many things about. I think now that I may have heard

sounds that were not, for my head was queer. Still, I listened all the while, and at last I heard that which I knew was real. There was a rustle among the leaves and the breaking of a twig in a treetop across the glade. I peered forth anxiously to see what could have made the noise. I did not like it. I did not know what it might be. At last I saw something. A face was looking at me from between the leaves. It had big eyes.

Then the face disappeared and I waited long and watched for it and, at last, it came again, and in another place. The light reached it more clearly now and I could see the face of It. Then something happened that was very strange. I forgot my aching thumb, my head was clearer and I was no longer afraid of anything. I was suddenly glad and brave and almost like myself again. I do not know why that feeling came.

I called aloud to It, making the sound we all did when we wanted another one to come. She did not answer at first, but stayed where she was, peering upward and backward through the wood. Then she called softly but still clung to her safe place, still looking and searching back and above and all about her. At last she seemed assured, and then the slim creature swung from her perch and slipped to the ground and ran across to my tree and was in the top so swiftly that it was wonderful. I could not climb like that. There was no other ape in all the woods who could catch her in the treetops, where the slender branches intermingled.

She was there in my own tree and near me, but she did not come to the nest. She ran up and peered down at me from a great limb above. I tried to climb to her and

could not, and crawled back into my nest again and licked my swollen thumb and mumbled sickly. She sat perched there and looked down at me and said nothing, but her eyes — they seemed so much larger than the eyes of others of us — opened more widely still. Then she made sounds like those I had been making and went back slowly to the body of the tree and came down to the limbs where my nest was, and raised herself and stood there with one hand on the tree and looking at me where I lay so nearly helpless.

It came but dimly to me, but I knew then, more than ever, that in all the forest and in all the hills there was no other she thing ape like her. I had never thought of that before. Her hair was short, but brown and glossy, and she was oddly slender, with a less protruding stomach than had we other apes. It was her head, though, which was most unlike the others. Her ears were not much outstanding nor were they ever twitching and turning, her under jaw did not protrude so much, and her upper lip was not a bank of a thing extending downward from almost no nose at all. My own big jaw did not protrude so much as did the jaws of many of my kind, and my upper lip was not so huge and wide, but I was a monster compared with It, and my upturned face, I think, more like the glaring countenances which we saw when the big swimming beasts in the river sometimes thrust their nozzles out of the water.

And her eyes, the big eyes, were as dark and deep, I thought, as the water in the spring with ferns about it behind a rock where I often drank, and, when she chuckled and chattered at anything, there came lights and

twinkles in them, just as there came to the deep spring water when the breeze blew upon it and made it ripple and change in the sunlight. Of course I did not dream this out very clearly — I did not know enough — but, even before this, the eyes of It had made me think of the spring by the rock. I do not know why this was so. Our eyes were not like the water. I once saw an ape poke a sharp stick into the eye of another and the eye went away. But I had poked sticks into the water and it did not go away. Why should the eyes of It make me think of the deep spring by the rock?

She was never gloomy nor sat and moped as did many of us when the cold and mist sometimes came suddenly, and we others but crouched and huddled in our nests for warmth. Ever alert and alive, when it was cold, she still sought nuts and the dropping fruits and other things we ate, and brought them to her home nest. It was well for her father and mother, who were so very old. They were dead, even now, but I did not know that, nor did It.

So I wanted It for my mate, and it was not because she was so swift and wise and could gather so well the nuts and fruits and the shell things which clung to the rocks beside the river and which, when we had cracked the shells with stones, were good to eat. I did not consider that. I wanted her, I think, as I have said, because her eyes were like the spring by the rock, but that must have been a foolish reason. I had wanted her much, and now, as she stood there, I wanted her more than ever, sick and crippled as I was.

She looked at me but made no sound, though I mumbled

and called and beckoned to her and reached out for her to come. She was still for a while, but at last there came that look into her eyes like the ripples I have told about, and then I knew that she would be my mate. She came out slowly along the limb and sat on the edge of the nest and reached out and stroked my thumb very gently. She lifted the hand and looked at it and then licked it and looked up at me and made a clucking, sighing sound. We could not talk, we apes, then, but we could make many different sounds that we understood, and I knew that she was trying to tell me that she pitied me. I tried to tell her, too, that I was glad, and she understood me surely. I put out my well arm and drew her into the nest with me and held her close, and she cuddled there contentedly. We were mates now, and I was very proud and nearly well again. So she stayed beside me for quite a time, I stroking her smooth back, and then she looked up and laughed, in our way, and chattered and then suddenly broke from me and ran to the tree trunk, and the sounds she made meant food. She was down in an instant and slipped into the forest, but she was not gone long. When she came back she had a branch which she carried between her teeth as she climbed, and on it was much fruit, which I ate, for again I was weak and hungry. And again and again she went and brought me many things to eat, more fruit and soft round roots, and, at last, by great fortune, a large bird she had caught upon its nest. It was what I needed. My strength came back. Then, we cuddled down together. Those were great days while I was growing well, with It beside me. She cared for me faithfully and soon I could clamber down the tree, though not yet

swiftly. I have the memory of those fair days yet. But they were few.

There came, one afternoon, wild howling from the forest, not more than four or five trees away, and I could see the Brown One coming toward us. He had found the refuge of It and was coming for her! I must fight him now, weak as I was. I rose in front of It and grasped the upright limb and was ready, but it did not count. My mate slipped by me and ran to the trunk and was on the ground and running for the forest on the other side of the glade and in the treetops there almost before I knew that she was gone. She knew that I was not yet fit to fight the Brown One. She called from far aloft and I knew that she would come back to me when she could. As for the Brown One, he did not stop to climb my tree, and try to kill me, though I gibbered and roared at him challengingly. He swung through the tops circling the glade and I could hear his threatening cries as they died distantly away in the forest beyond. He was in chase of my It again. Somehow, I did not fear for her. As well pursue the silly shadows which fly across the treetops when the white things up in the sky came floating across the fire ball there. One so light and slender and sure-handed could pass along the slender outreaching branches where none heavier could follow. But I gnashed my teeth, for I wanted to follow the Brown One and try to kill him.

I slept at last, and when I awoke I was like another creature. I was almost well. I scarcely ached, and my fingers were all strong. The thumb lay stiffly and pressed crookedly down upon my palm, as it had been broken, but the thing was hardening and knitting. Well was it

for me that we apes recovered quickly from our wounds. When hurt, we either died or were soon ourselves again.

I had none to help me now, and it may be it was good for me. I clambered down from the tree and wandered forth and found a little food and came back and waited for the return of It, but she did not come. I waited and it seemed to me that in my craze I was some other creature. I climbed down and ran about in the forest senselessly. Then, at night I came back again to the nest and slept. I seemed to know more in the morning. I had my senses. I went down beside the river and ate many of the shell things and I ate fruit I found. I would find It now. I searched the forest; I even went to the nest of the Old One, but it was vacant and the gnawed bones of the Old One and his mate lay on the ground beside his tree. I could find It nowhere. I did not believe that the Brown One could seize her in the treetops, but he might have chased her far away. I did not know what to do. So the days passed. Meanwhile, I became all my mighty self. My injured thumb was strong though crooked forward against my hand. Then, one day, a strange thing happened:

I had wandered far along the river bank and was sitting foolishly upon a rock and playing with a piece of wood which had floated down and stranded. It was a stout thing, larger at one end than the other, and very heavy. The crook of my broken thumb, as it lay pressed against the palm, left a space beneath, and through this space I idly thrust the small end of the wood. Thus my fingers were above on one side of the club and my thumb upon the other, bearing hardly when I chose, for I could press

the thumb down strongly, though I could scarcely raise the end. It was a new sensation which came to interest me suddenly. I could clasp the stick with my fingers clutching the other side and I could do things with it. I whirled the club about my head and smote the bushes and broke them easily. It was wonderful! Never before had fingers and thumb of ape accomplished a grip together! The club was hard and heavy, yet in my strong grasp it was but a plaything. It delighted me. I would take it with me. That was well.

I started toward my glade, for night was coming and I had eaten enough. I took a path which ran through hollows and beside a long rocky upheaval in which were many abruptly ending defiles where, sometimes, I had caught small animals which could not climb the smooth, steep sides. I heard a rustling in one of these and thought that I had some prize assured. The entrance was but a few feet wide and the passage, as I knew, ended in a sheer height. I followed the defile to the end, but could find no living thing. The sound which had attracted me may have been made by some large bird which had flown before I entered. I turned toward the entrance again, but stopped with fear in my heart, from what I saw. I knew that death was close to me. I yelled aloud at first in my terror and then became suddenly quiet. That was the way with most of us big males of the apes in great emergencies. We became, when fatally at bay, sullen, desperate things. I would die fighting. The hair upon me bristled.

It was the great wolf. A gaunt and fearful creature was the wolf of the time, one we tree people fled from when

we met him in the forest; and when he and others of his kind gathered sometimes and ran in packs, even the urus or the mighty aurochs ran fast and far, for few animals, even among the greatest, could face the onslaught of the pack. As for one of us apes, when he met a wolf singly, grapple as he might and tear with his shorter teeth, the wolf's jaws ever, somehow, found the neck, and that was the end. For me there was no escape. The great wolf rushed upon me and leaped high at my throat.

I know not why nor how I did it. In the past I would have tried but blindly to seize upon the grisly brute, and so die grappling and seeking to bite, but some new and sudden impulse, some fierce, unconscious repetition of what I had just been doing in mere wantonness, impelled my tautened nerves and muscles and, even as he sprang, I swung the club with all my recovered strength, and, there in mid-air, it crashed down upon the fearsome head. It crashed as do the trees when the winds break them, and the big body dropped as it came hurtling against me and felling me — but the jaws seized not. I leaped to my feet for flight, but the monster only lay there heaving. Then I went mad, mad as the sick jackal. I swung the club again and again and brought it down upon the evil head until the skull was crushed to pulp. I was my old self no more. I ran out from the gorge and leaped up and down and howled across the waste and the river and toward all the forest in wild triumph. I was the king of the apes! I could kill as never ape had killed before! There were fewer things to fear in all the world. I had learned to use the club! It was wonderful. I howled daringly all the way homeward to my nest, and smote

many things with my great weapon as I passed. I climbed the tree carrying it in my teeth, and could scarcely sleep for exultation. I was a new creature. I had found that which made me so.

I came down in the morning, bearing my club with me. Ever after that I carried it, and I may tell now, that as time passed, since I could not hold it constantly in my mouth, this club-carrying made me walk more and more on my hind legs until it became, unconsciously, a habit with me. Now I went more recklessly about my food-seeking. I met a herd of the wild hogs, a big sow with pigs, and ran among them and slew a pig with my club and then leaped into a tree, for the charging mother was too fearsome for me, even with my weapon. Then she and her living litter went away and I came down and ate my breakfast from the pig. It was good. So, for days, I ranged through the wood and by the river, but all was not yet well. Something sank within me. Now I know what it was. I wanted It.

Still, I was jubilant over my club. I was vain and drunken with the power I had. Another ape rose in the path ahead of me, an ape as big as I was, and I roared and ran at him, I know not why. I was not angry and did not want to hurt him, but I wanted to smite something alive. It had been good to hit the wolf. The ape stood his ground until I was almost upon him, then, amazed and alarmed by the whirling of the club, he leaped for a tree trunk and I struck him furiously on the haunches as he scrambled upward. He fled shrieking through the treetops.

But there came, stronger than ever, the hunger for It,

and I ranged through the forest for many days and into places strange to me. Food I discovered in abundance. So I wandered restlessly until I passed, one afternoon, across a wide, bare space, almost a plain, where there stood a grove of trees, up one of which I climbed, and slept there in its great crotch.

In the morning something made me turn again toward my own region. I was nearing there when I heard a distant cry, and I knew in a moment what it meant. My It had returned to seek me and was again in peril. I bounded forward and saw it all. In a great treetop was my It, and beneath her was the Brown One. I did not know it then, but he had killed her old father and mother, even before he found her with me, and when she fled from our nest he had chased her far away, but vainly. After days of flight and hiding she had eluded him and had come back seeking me, and he had come back as well, thinking, in his dim way, thus to find her. He had found her, indeed, but he was about to find, too, what was not well for him.

She was above him, where the branches were weak and where he could not clamber to her easily, but she was shrieking loudly, as well she might. I made no sound at first. I ran to the tree and climbed, with my club between my teeth, until I reached a limb on which was fighting room, and then I roared aloud. The screaming of It changed in an instant to shrieks of joy. The Brown One glared downward and saw me and scrambled downward with a snarling roar, to the limb upon which I stood. He ran close, and we stood as we had in the other fight, scarce a yard apart, each sustained by the grip of our long

toes and with one hand clutching an upright branch, leaving the other free. In his free hand was nothing; in mine was the club. He thrust forward to clutch and pull me to him.

It was his end! I swung my club aloft as he lurched toward me savagely, and smote down fairly upon his head with all my maddened strength. Like clay, his brute skull caved in, for the blow was devilish. He did not even scream. His fingers and toes clung to the limbs for an instant, and then he dropped silently far to the ground. He drew his arms and legs together quiveringly once or twice and then lay still. He was dead!

I danced upon the limb and roared and yelped and mocked. The Brown One was dead! In all the world there was none other so great and wise as I. What other knew the club?

My mate came to me wonderingly and chattering, and we caressed each other. We went down the tree and I beat the head of the Brown One as I had that of the wolf, but there was no need. Already the little insects were running over him. He was dead. In the night something would come and eat him.

We sought our own tree and our nest and were unafraid. We brought more leaves and soft grasses and mosses and coiled our arms about each other when the darkness came each night and were warm and happy. We were mates, and sometimes we would snuggle our heads together and make a soft sound like "Wee-chew, wee-chew, wee-chew." There is a bird which makes a mating sound like that to-day, only, of course, more musically than could we apes.

Sometimes we went far from the tree, for always I had my club, and It imitated me by walking on her hind legs and, at last, carried a little club herself, though she could not use it very well at first. We had adventures and sometimes scant escapes, but my club was heavy and I was strong, and, when too hard pressed, there were always the treetops for our refuge. But we did not venture far out on the great plains where were the grass-eaters and the fierce things which devoured them, nor did we venture forth at night. Sometimes, for I feared none, we visited the nests of other apes and they came to visit us. And, because of this, a great change came.

There had been rare quarrels with other apes and I had smitten them sorely with my club and they had wondered at it and feared it. They saw my boldness, too, and how I killed for food things which I crept upon and which I could not have killed with my bare hands, and soon they, too, sought clubs and tried to imitate me, for imitation is ever the way of apes. They could not do as well, for they had no such grip as I with my maimed thumb, but, even with its use by their finger grip alone, the thing became a weapon and soon our kind, of whom there were not great numbers — there were other apes of other kinds whom we hated, because they were so like and yet so unlike us — carried each a club and so began to walk erect as I did. And we learned to band ourselves together, even more wisely than the wolves, and we could surround one of the wild horses in a gorge or beside a bluff and so get much meat at one time for all of us. We acquired new sounds and cries, too, with our increasing need for speech, and soon all began to recognize them. There was one

wild cry sent out in emergency which meant "Club! Club! Bring your Club!" and so it was with other calls. We had no names yet, but something like the beginning of a language was at hand, a tongue of clucks and cries and yelps, but yet the seed of language. All our world was becoming different. The other creatures began to fear us. The smaller, once unafraid, now fled when we appeared, but the great flesh-eaters sought us more fiercely than ever, since we were more careless and conspicuous. But, if we were more daring, we had become more cautious also, and they seldom caught us.

And there came, before all this, a time when It stayed in the nest and I brought her food. And, one day, when I came back with eggs from the nest of a river duck, she held in her arms a tiny ape which was our child. It thrived amazingly, for well cared for were the child and It, my mate. And as a child, my young one ran about erect and smote things with his little stick. So it was, in a way, too, with the children of other apes of our kind. They also learned, though more slowly, to run about on their hind feet and to wield the little clubs they carried.

But sometimes all we apes were in mortal terror, not of the bears and tigers and other dread things of the wood, but of that which came suddenly and made even the fierce beasts themselves fly whining to their dens and hiding-places. Nothing could help us in those awful hours, for there would be rumblings and growlings in the earth beneath us and it would lift itself up in vast, heaving waves, and would sometimes burst open in long rents, and flames and deadly fumes would issue, and great

reaches of the forest would disappear and all within them perish, and, when the thundering and roaring ceased, the look of all the world about us would be changed. But these things would pass, though there would be left great fissures through which came sheets of fire which burned continuously; and when the cold came, as it did at times, we could go as near the fire as we dared, and then the cold would seem to go away.

And the days went well for It and me, and other children came and were soon full grown, as was the way, and they took mates and there were many homes in the tree-tops. We became a strong people, my family and its kind, for we alone had the club. We yet lived much on fruits and nuts and roots and eggs and the shell-fish, but we ate more flesh now, for, as I have said, we had learned to hunt together and that brought an abundance.

But there was ever the thing we should have dreaded more. Away to the north high mountains upreared themselves toward the sky, and through a mighty gorge in these the river came. Beyond the mountains was a vast lake. Sometimes the mountain crests would redden and they would vomit up fire when the upheavals we so feared came and the ground lifted up and split and the forests fell. Then, afterward, would come great storms and the river would be wider and deeper and darker and rush down fiercely, bearing tree trunks and the floating carcasses of wild things. But still we thought little of all this. We lived for each day, as it came, unknowingly.

It was late one afternoon in the hot time when the leaves were heaviest and I was in the nest with It, for there was still another child, and we had done much

climbing throughout the day and were curled down and resting, half asleep. Something at last aroused me and I looked about. The air was heavy, but soon there began a rustling of the leaves and then a shaking, but it seemed to come from far away and only the tremor of it to reach us.

Then, all at once, the sky darkened and the earth heaved. It sprang up screaming, with the child held to her, and we both clung desperately to the limbs beside us, as the trees threshed back and forth. Then came the fearful, thundering, blasting sound we knew so well, and flames burst from the distant mountains as they seemed themselves to lift and sway in air. Then followed a roar as of all the sounds of earth together, and I saw the great walls torn apart and rise and fall again, by the light of the awful flames in the darkness far away. The earthquake ceased, but not the dreadful roar, stunning and deafening from afar, but coming nearer and nearer with each instant. Something enormous, black, with a great white foaming crest, uprose and lifted higher than all the forest. The mountain had parted and the great lake was so hurled down upon us! It came, itself a mountain. I saw It, for a moment, with the child held in one arm, then something struck her and she fell. I could see the crest of the coming mountain towering far above me, then I was swept from the limb and, stunned, gasping, strangling, was carried away in the black waters.

CHAPTER II

THE AXEMEN

I AWOKE lying on a stretch of turf in an angle of the rocks by the river. It was almost midday and it seemed to me that I must have been aroused by the sunshine on my face. I rose to my feet and stretched myself dazedly, for my head hurt me. I reached for the club which lay near me, and examined it curiously. It was not my club at all, and, when I looked about, the rocks and earth and trees appeared as unfamiliar as the weapon. I swung the club joyously, for it was a better one than I had ever seen, strong, well balanced, and heavy at the end. I tried to think, but only mists would come to me. Had I ever another club? Then I perceived that there was something tied around my waist, a broad belt of hyena skin, doubled up on one side into a sort of pocket held together by knotted sinews. In this pocket was a thin flake of flint nearly as broad as my hand and with sharp edges. How came I to have such a thing? And then I noticed, suddenly, and wondered how it was, that the hair all over me was thin and scant. I was frightened, I could not understand it.

I strode out from my place in the rocks and looked across the river. Its banks were new to me. I turned toward the north and there were mountains, though unlike those of old, and when I passed around the ledge, even the for-

est trees and the rocky passes appeared changed. Had I ever seen other rocks or forests? Then I heard a shout. I turned and saw two great apes — at least I thought them such — each beckoning to me and calling. The cries were followed by loud clucks and gurglings, a kind of talk. And I understood it. How could I do that?

I went toward them slowly, alert and with my club grasped in all readiness, but I was not much alarmed. I felt, but dimly, that the two great creatures were my friends. Each bore a club like mine, but neither lifted it as I advanced. They but pointed up the river and jabbered noisily.

What creatures they were! Almost straight they stood, with no more hair upon their bodies than had I, and their thumbs closed readily and easily upon the fingers, making the grip of their club secure. But it was their faces and the expression upon them which most astonished me. They were quite unlike the dream of apes, still, somehow, with me. They had noses more distinct, their ears were rounded, there was less repellent expanse of jaw and upper lip between the mouth and nostrils, and the teeth, which showed as they chattered, were not so long and sharp. Their eyes, though, were their striking feature, since in them appeared a look of understanding which I recognized. They were of my kind.

I made no answer to them and, as I came near, they looked upon me pityingly, putting their hands to their heads and pointing toward the place where I had awakened. Then, for the first time, I began to realize things. They were saying that I had been hurt. Instinctively I lifted my own hand and there came away a little blood.

Who had struck me? I swung my club furiously, but they only chattered the more and made motions, one of them running to the ledge and pointing upward to its top and making a sound which I knew. I had been with them on some sort of an expedition and a stone had rolled down and hurt me as I slept. That was why my head ached and why I could, at first, remember nothing. I was no longer angry. I listened eagerly to what they were trying to tell me.

One of the two, as they pointed up the river, made a repeated bleating, as of an animal in distress, and when he said "Stag," "Stag," I knew that there was good hunting close at hand. I shouted and waved my club, and we dashed away together.

The pathway near the river led but a short way before it opened out upon a little low-lying grassy plain extending to the bank, with marshy places here and there, and upon this natural meadow half a score or more great, splendid antlered things were feeding. They grouped near together, with the exception of a single cow, walking round and round one of the marshy pools and bleating piteously at intervals. We shouted when we saw her. We knew that her fawn was mired and helpless and we should kill it and have food.

We entered the tall reeds and grass of the lowland and stooped low, slipping through noiselessly until we were near the distressed mother. Then we uprose and rushed and yelled together. The startled elk leaped and ran swiftly for a distance, then, as there came the sound of struggle and plaintive bleating from the quagmire, she checked herself and turned to charge. There came

an awful interjection. There rose from the forest edge, though far away up the river, a roar so fearful and appalling, so dreadful and far-reaching, that all the world seemed dazed from the moment the sound tore across the valley and, even before these echoes died away, the herd of feeding elk leaped forward together in frantic bounds and swept close beside us in their flight, carrying with them the mother cow. The great cave tiger was abroad, though not yet near, and before him all living things must flee. We were shaking ourselves, with fright, but we knew the monster had doubtless just now slain because of the cruel roar which told it, and so we were in no danger for the moment. The elk calf, a great thing nearly a third grown, was standing helpless near the quagmire edge. We ventured in a little way and crushed the thin bones of its head with our hard clubs and, together, dragged it to the firm earth and so, hurriedly, across the valley and up among the rocks. With one on watch, we attacked the body of the calf with our sharp flakes of flint, and with much toil and many strokes made openings in the skin and hacked and hewed and wrenched until we had the beast divided into three parts. Then, each with his burden of skin and flesh upon his back and his club thrust in his belt, we went straining hurriedly across the lowland and up the path among the rocks whence we had come until we were another long distance away, where, climbing upon a huge boulder, we ate ravenously. It was a feast. Very good to eat is the flesh of young stag.

Rested and full of strength, we took up our march again until we turned into the opening of a long gorge, almost a valley, which lay not far from the river and nearly par-

allel with it. I knew that in this gorge our homes were, but I could not yet remember much about them, though each new scene, as we advanced, became familiar. I recognized the place where I had once killed a hare with a well-hurled stone.

Suddenly one of my companions gave utterance to a long drawn cry, "O-o-e-e, O-o-e-e," far reaching and sustained, until there came an answer from farther up the valley, "O-o-e-e, O-o-e-e!" Then, in the distance, seeming to issue from the solid rock, came three figures, and I knew they were our people.

In the lead were two women and behind them was a child, a little girl. The woman first to reach us was of middle age, and, chattering joyously, she took the load from the older of my companions and trudged along beside him, as did the younger woman with the other man, and I knew that the women were their mates. All together, we went on to the place whence the woman and child had issued, and there was the entrance to a cave, not very large, but which rose and widened out inside into what was a vast chamber, fifty feet across, at least, and nearly as many high. Away off in one corner of the floor there gleamed a tiny light which indicated a smouldering fire, and about it, tending it, an old man tottered. There were heaps of leaves and grass, too, and upon the floor were a few skins of animals and many bones and roots and the shells of nuts, all scattered heedlessly about. The women chattered continuously, for they were delighted with the meat. Each was eating torn strips, raw, but soon one ran out and brought in an armful of meat, which was stuck firmly upon long sharpened sticks,

and thrust into the fed flame until it was burned and blackened and then eaten with greater gusto. The child devoured her share like a young hyena, while the elders sucked and mumbled. The women seemed to know me and be glad that I had come. One of them pointed, laughing, to the burden I had carried, and then up toward the valley, and I knew that my own cave was there. Soon, refreshed, I took up my own burden of the meat and left my friends and followed the path southward, knowing instinctively each rise and run. I reached a place where the rock sloped sharply down and where, half-way up, appeared the dark mouth of a narrow opening. I had reached my home at last.

Up the steep ascent of thirty feet or more was a twisting way, worn smooth. Long travelled must have been that path. I entered the cave and found it very like the other, save that it was not more than a fourth as large. The one I had just left was the largest in all the region.

There were embers still alive where was a spot of red at one end of the cave, and I cast down my load and threw on fresh wood, which was at hand, and then lay down to sleep, for I was tired. But I could not sleep. There were flames and light in the cave and, now, everything came back to me. I remembered the two days before I went away with my companions. I remembered the pleasures and perils of my life, and all the horrors of the discovery, not long ago, when I, returning from a night spent with a hunter in another cave, found all of those I had lived with dead and nearly all devoured, all slain in the cave together, surprised while sleeping, by the wolf

pack which had found swift entrance through the opening, for once left carelessly unblocked by slabs of stone.

Then, all at once, with my clearing mind came to me the thought that I was not a solitary creature inhabiting that cave. I ran to its mouth and my "O-o-e-e" went forth resoundingly.

Again and again I called, and at last there was an answer, nearer and nearer with each reply, and a man came running easily. I was glad. It was Woof, my hunting mate, who lived with me in the cave. A great companion was Woof. He had left his own people to come and live with me, for we had known each other a long time. He was almost as tall and strong as I and could run almost as swiftly as the little deer. He loped up the pathway to our home, saw the meat, and shouted aloud in satisfaction and began to roast and eat. He had not been over-fortunate in his hunting in my absence.

We talked long in our clucking way until the day was late. Then we heaped up the stone slabs until the entrance to the cave was filled nearly to the top and threw ourselves down to sleep. As my eyes grew heavy I dreamed again perplexedly. Again I was in the treetops, swinging easily along and hearing familiar cries. And there were flames and roaring and tottering forests. I would waken at times and look upon the smouldering fire and toward where Woof lay breathing deeply, and realize the present, and then a fog would arise and Woof and the cave side would disappear. Had there been something before? I could see, at times, a face, but to whom it belonged I could not tell. I knew it now; it was a face of another time, the merry, impish face of an ape-

like creature with whom I had had comradeship. I awakened and groped hungrily in my mind, but could remember nothing. At last I slept contentedly.

With the flood of the fair morning light came still greater clearness to my thoughts. I forgot for a time even that I had dreamed and was, like Woof, eager for the outside. It was a good thing that there was yet meat enough to finish in a great breakfast. As things went we were well-to-do young men. Club in hand, we tumbled down the pathway and swung up the long ravine.

We finally clambered to the summit of towering rocks and looked up and down seekingly; it was a way we had, and with reason, in those death-laden times, never to travel far without ascending a tree or some eminence and searching the entire country in sight. Now we saw nothing moving save two black spots in the direction whence we came. We knew what they meant, and the long-drawn call for them went forth, "O-o-e-e, O-o-e-e!" The two men, running, were Gurr and Hair, my companions of the day before, who were soon beside us there on the rock pile.

Strictly speaking, we had yet no proper names, though we had the result of an effort toward them. We could indicate an absent one, but in most cases only by a sort of mimicry. Thus Woof was so known because of a trick of his in imitating well the "woof" of a startled beast. Gurr was so designated because of his husky voice, and his wife was Goor because her call was similar to his though not so harsh. There was another man with a split lip and singular utterance, and we said "Chu-Chu" when we referred to him. Hair was so called because he

was the most hairy one among us. We must have known more than a hundred different sounds for different things. Names, or sounds, we had for fire, water, food, the sun and moon and trees and rocks and clubs, and for most of the great beasts.

And certain other words we had, too, that had to do with actions, such as fighting and the hunt. We had indeed the inception of a language which lifted us above and beyond all other creatures. Of some personal names, mostly imitative, there were Gluck-Gluck, Blink, and Limp, and there was one big cave man Ugh, who grunted savagely at times, and who was very strong. His jaws were heavy, his mouth was armed with great teeth, and his thumbs and great toes were very long. He could climb better than most of us, but was dull-witted and not any more successful than others in the hunt. Once he built a great nest in a treetop, but abandoned it and returned to his hollow in the rocks, because it was warmer there.

Not long had there been fire in the caves, and in some tribes they had no fire at all, and ate flesh raw. Once the old man, Hair's father, tried to tell me what his father had told him of how they first learned that they could bring fire with lighted brands from the fire mountains. It was a wonder that he could remember so much. Now, when the fire failed us we went to the burning places miles away and lighted fagots and journeyed back, building frequent fires on our way, so that each of us could keep his torch alight until we reached the caves again. It was rarely, though, that this was necessary, for we had learned to keep our fires by covering giant brands with ashes when

we went away, and when, at times, a failure came, the fire could usually be renewed from another cave. Always some of the old women or old men remained at home to keep the fires alight. Our life was fierce and simple. We thought little, and cared not, save for the moment. We were hungry and must eat; we were cold and must seek warmth; we were in peril and must flee or fight; we had the elementary passions and must mate; we had rages sometimes and sought to slay. There were not many of us in the long gorge or valley, though nature had made it a place abounding in caves everywhere. We were but a dozen or two in all, doubtless all related or descended from a single family, and the nearest creatures of our kind were another group living in the hills far to the southward. These people we seldom met, and when by chance there was a meeting, it was with a somewhat sullen watchfulness on either side, though we had never warred. Such were we, hungry and gorged, alternately, alert among the other creatures, seeking some, fearing some, chasing or fleeing, and having the vast advantage of being almost omnivorous in our feeding. And there was a fierce joy to it as well. Hoo! It was a life!

We four trooped onward together, for we had made a plan, and when we neared the cave of Ugh we howled together and he joined us, grim as the great-jawed hyena. We wanted him along because we might have need of one who could deal strong blows, and his club was heavy. I envied him that tough club of blackened wood, the more so because it chanced that I alone among us might not find the thing too mighty for the arm.

We needed force that day, for ours was to us a mighty

prospect. There were urus, which Woof had discovered a day or two before, now pasturing in a not distant lowland, and the slaying of the urus was a great event comparable only to the rare killing of the aurochs, the mighty bison of the time. Woof had discovered a band of urus a day or two before feeding in a narrow valley which ended in a precipice some thirty feet in height as it neared the river. In this valley were various small mounds, and we could, by utilizing these, get the urus between us and the river, and by loud shouting and a sudden rush drive them in a panic to their deaths. This had been done once in the past and might be done again. We went eastward through the hills, until we could see the urus feeding below, and then crept down into the valley, ever keeping the little mounds between us and the grazing beasts, Ugh in the lead. Then something happened. There was a threatening bellow as Ugh crept by one of the mounds between us, and he sprang back, with abundant reason, for, within twenty yards of him was a huge bull feeding apart from the rest. For a moment the beast stood still, then, with lowered head and glaring eyes, charged savagely upon the hunter, while the rest of us fled, yelling.

Not a moment too soon did Ugh leap and crouch beside the mound, but even his mortal peril did not destroy his hardihood. Even as he eluded the rush, he swung his club and brought it down with all his might as the brute swept by, seeking, by some chance, to stun him. It was not to be, nor, because of an amazing happening, was Ugh in further peril. It was the strange chance in a thousand, but the club, driven so hardly by that enormous, muscular arm, came fairly down upon the sharp point of one

of the great horns and, dense and tough as was its fibre, split and impaled itself and was wrenched from the grip of Ugh as the beast crashed by. And then followed a grotesque spectacle.

Stunned, dazed, crazed with the pain of the benumbing blow, the urus galloped blindly about in circles, bellowing and almost bleating and shaking its great head. The impaled club was flung off at last, flying a score of yards, and, a moment later, the beast, regaining his senses, went dashing off in the direction already taken by the flying herd. So ended the urus hunt. We had failed, but that hunt, in its indirect results, was vast in its effects upon the future of the Cave men.

Ugh regained his weapon, split at its end, and, as we gathered again, stood gazing upon it ruefully. We wandered away to where the creek of the valley entered the river, and found crayfish and the eggs of waterfowl, and feasted merrily, and lay there resting in a place where the sun shone warm on the rocks.

But Ugh could not keep his eyes from his split club. It was rent fairly across the middle of its heavier end for a length of more than a foot from its head, and he, with his strong hands, could pull the sides an inch or two apart. Woof stood beside him, and as Ugh thus strained the wood until there was an opening, Woof, in sheer sport, dropped into the inviting space a great flake of flint which had parted from the rock and lay there ready to his hand. As Ugh, surprised, released the parts they clashed together upon the flint and held it there, for the wood was tough of fibre and had a vicious springiness. There, held strongly and tenaciously in the jaws of the cleft club, was

the broad, heavy flint flake, its sharp edges outstanding inches on either side. In the hand of Ugh was a rude axe, the first whose handle was ever clutched by man!

We all stood looking curiously at this strange mingling of wood and stone, when Ugh, with a hoarse cry, swung it aloft and waved it above our heads in mock threatening and shouted "Kill!" Well might he yell out "Kill!" We knew it could do that were the stone but firmly fixed, and we all alike yelled, but wondered at it. The stone was left in the club just as it had been gripped and so was carried back with us. More than it did the others, the stone and wood so seemingly grown together in what might be a mighty weapon, fascinated me. For the split club with a stone — already we sometimes, by signs, exchanged things in the beginning of all barter — I gave Ugh my own fine club, and my new possession I carried with me to my cave that night. A dim idea of something great was forming in my mind. Could the stone be held there always, what a weapon I would have! I smote with the rude axe, and unshattered and unmoved it bit deep into thick tree bark. With repeated strokes the axe stone loosened a little in its accidental socket and I was troubled. I strained it into proper bearing in the cleft again and studied how to make it permanently firm. The problem was still with me when I reached our cave with Woof. It came to me to tie the axe as we tied things, with sinews — for we had, somehow, learned how to make a knot — and with sinew I toiled long beside the fire until I had bound, with my utmost straining strength, and firmly fastened together the intersection of the rugged flake of stone and the tough wood. Then I ran out and down the

path in the moonlight and tried the axe recklessly upon a tree trunk and found the stone immovable. It could not be wrenched nor sprung from the eye. I had an axe! The axe, mightiest weapon and implement in the hand of man for thousands of years to come, had been invented by chance, and rudely, in a single day. The age of wood and the club alone had passed. The Age of Stone had come!

So I alone had the axe, and soon, in our hunting as in the littler things, like the getting away of a vine in our paths through the forest, as compared with the axe the club was a feeble thing. The sharp stone could shear the little things, and the sharp and heavy stone, driven deeply, could bring death where the club might only stun or bruise. With the axe I could readily open a way along the thick skin of a slain thing, making easy the stripping for the flint flakes, and with the axe I could divide the body. We must all have axes! With my own I split the ends of other clubs, and flint flakes were sought to bind in them, and soon all grown males of our kith and kin bore axes as did I. But, oddly enough, there was no axe possessed in all the clan quite so hard and rightly shaped and keen as mine. Nature had made, accidentally, a better axe than we, in our crude and bungling way, could fashion at the time. Yet we were better equipped now than ever before for either hunt or fray, though there came soon a miserable time when we almost lost our courage and were fearful in our coming and going.

There was a broad and pleasant wide-open space, almost a plain, in the near forest which was our nearest and favoured hunting ground. It was acres in extent and

upon it were hosts of berry bushes and little nut thickets, in which harboured many hares and small game of all sorts, and also birds that ran upon the ground where were nuts, which were good to eat. Food of some kind we always found there. In the midst of this small plain uprose, as if all out of space, though near the mountains, a long, huge rock, perhaps some twenty feet in height, and with sides so sheer that none except a man or other climbing animal could reach the top. But some great upheaval had split this monster rock crosswise, and so there gapped through it a passageway, broad at one end and narrowing at the other, the space between the walls filled with soil up to the level of the land about. There stood this strange split rock, almost in the midst of this little plain, of so much importance to us, but which now we dared not enter. There had come there one of the things we feared and had made it his chosen haunt.

What brought the cave bear to our hunting place no one could tell. It may have been the berries or the roots or some whim of the beastly savage brain. We had, shudderingly, to hunt around but not near the little plain, and in my own heart a great anger was growing. "Why? Why?" I said in my dull brain.

Whatever the cause, there he was, and one day, when two of the cave men had ventured a little way in the bushes, one of them was smitten down by a huge paw, and the other heard but one gasp in the bushes as he fled. Daily, watching from the treetops which fringed the place, could we see the hulking monster as he ranged the open spaces or went toward his lair, to be lost there for a while. And near that thicket lair rose the vast rock.

One night we were together, a company of us, in the great cave of Hair and Gurr, and we were hungry, because we had come from bad hunting toward the north. We could have found more had we not feared to invade the bushy plain, and I could have howled aloud in anger, for I was half famished. I thought of the purple berries and the sweet nuts and the sucking roots and the little things to kill, and I sulked off alone and dared and ventured in my mind, and there came the thought, a thing so dreadful that I gasped in the thinking of it, yet which clung to me as fiercely as cling the vines which bear the blood-red blossoms on the rocks. And my dreams came to a red climax the next day, when one man, venturing into the borders of the plain, just narrowly escaped the monster. All through the night I tossed fitfully, and again the desperate fancy gripped me. I leaped to my feet and swung my axe and yelled out "Bear" and "Kill!" and Woof awakened and leaped in alarm, and laughed when he saw that I seemed raving. Sometimes Cave men had madness.

But the craze was on me, and, the next morning, I ran up and down the valley and howled aloud and screamed and yelped that I, I alone, would kill the monster in the plain. The others heard my ravings and came out, but they only grinned and chuckled, though all followed me as I turned and ran southward and toward the wood-path which led through the forest to where was the little plain — and death. I did not linger, and my following tribe ran close behind me until I reached the very edge of the dangerous ground, when, as monkeys climb, they swarmed into the treetops while I slipped forward among the bushes,

a crazed and yet contained thing, half demented, strong and unconsciously, blindly, seeking what seemed suicide, but — with the Axe.

I crept into a little pathway and saw nothing, and so slipped along unhindered until I reached the rock. I climbed it, tremblingly, for another mood had come upon me now. I was afraid. I threw myself down upon the stone and shook all over as the leaves shake in the aspen tree which the wind owns. So in awful terror I tossed about for a time until, in my very desperation, the rage came back again and I cared for nothing in all the world, for the blue sky or the people in the treetops or myself or death or mangling. I leaped to my feet and danced up and down and whooped and swung my arms. Then, in a near thicket, there was a rustle, and “woof,” and the huge cave bear rushed forth and gazed about.

Slowly at first, looking up toward me, the monster came shuffling and shambling into the open. He saw me plainly now, and there was another great “woof,” a growl, and he lurched forward with astounding swiftness. And then just when the dread was most appalling, the awful sickness, which had come again, left me, and I became cold of blood and insanely crafty and blood-hungry. Then I, the Axeman, dropped to the ground, not a score of yards before the approaching beast!

The monster uprose, for a moment, apparently astonished, then plunged forward with a growling roar as I dashed in flight between the gaping jaws of the split rock.

Not twenty yards through the rock did the fissure run, but I was near that fearful paw-stroke when I leaped through the further narrow opening and fell panting to

the ground. And even as I sprawled, the great body hurled and wedged itself into the tapering space, and the "swish" of the paw passed close beside my head. I lay just out of reach. I could see the red jaws and grinding teeth and wicked, glaring eyes and hear the rush of the foul breath above me.

Straining outward with his one free arm the brute struck savagely, and his great strokes fairly whistled through the air as they swept within a hand's breadth of me. For a moment I was faint again with the sickening fear, and then once more the change came. I leaped to my feet and yelled. There, pushing, gnashing his teeth and striking, clawing blows in vain, was the monster who had been our dread. I became a sudden demon. I roared as roars the tiger. I danced about closely as the beast strained out with lowered head, and then I leaped in as the paw went by and whirled my axe aloft and struck. What a blow was that! When had even the strong arm of the Cave man delivered stroke as mighty as that which sent my axe clean to the haft into the bone and brain of that huge head? Clean to the haft the blade was driven, and there it stayed as I leaped backward wrenching in vain at the tough handle. I shrank aside to avoid another stroke, but that was needless. There was a roar, a wild, helpless clawing, and then the huge head in which the axe was buried sagged downward and the monstrous thing was dead! I, single-handed, had slain the great cave bear! Never before in all the happenings of time had so great a thing been done!

The shuddering, breathless people in the treetops were the insane ones now. Their frenzied shoutings filled the

wood at first, and soon they were around me, but wondering and awestricken and silent again. Their demeanour toward me was such as they had never shown before. I was greater than they. The huge body of the bear was hauled out and the skin taken, toilsomely, and ever after I slept upon it in my cave.

The world had changed for me. I was another being and I could not help it. I had been called "Scar" because of the great scar upon my face straight up and down from eye to jaw, but they changed my name and called me "Bear," and like a bear I must have grown somewhat as time passed. The news of the great slaying went about among the creatures of our kind as far as our world extended and I became an awesome man apart. Even Woof, my comrade, seemed half afraid of me and, at last, following the mating instinct, took a mate and went away from me to live in a cave far up the gorge. I had it in my mind to take a mate myself, and resolved upon an almost burly woman of the Cave people I had met afar, who feared nothing and who hunted, sometimes alone, as did the men. I went to get her, but she had disappeared. She had hunted once too often recklessly. I might have taken another, but, I know not why, the mood to do so never came again. I still joined with the others in the chase and my axe stroke was the heaviest, and none surpassed me whenever there was danger to be met.

And the seasons and the years passed, and all men had the stone axes, and we fed well, and children were born, and the people of the long gorge grew in number. Then came a pall. The world was going wrong.

Creeping as creeps the snake in the grass and bushes, down where the rocks shelve off into the lowlands, had come, with the swiftly passing seasons, a dreadful something. The sun, the big blazing thing up in the sky, seemed growing old and helpless and did not warm us as he had before. And down the sides of the mountain came crawling those wide blue-white cloaks of ice, never stopping, always crawling.

The seasons had been changing steadily. Each year was unlike the one before it, with skies more lowering and chillier blasts and less of sunshine. And in the cold time the snow fell and stayed longer than in the past and did not leave the mountain tops at all in summer, and the days of the seasons when the sun shone and there came the fruits and nuts were not so many. Ever the grass upon the plains grew less and the creatures feeding there became less in their numbers, and it was not good hunting. There was a constant thinning of the creatures which felt the change and ever they turned toward the south, the south above which the sun seemed to shine less coldly. The chill came even to me, and I thought dimly that it might be because I was no longer young, for I had seen old men shudder when the cold came. But it was not that, it was the world itself, the ice sheets pushing themselves down from the north.

Sometimes the hunters, venturing too far away, hampered in snow, would become exhausted and go to sleep, and when they did this they never woke. When we found them they would not answer, and we took their axes and left them. It came to me at last, that we must do as had done the beasts, and flee southward, where, perhaps, it would

be warmer. Why had I not sooner seen the need? Why had our clan alone been reckless fools and failed to join the birds and beasts, and others of our own kind?

The cold became more dreadful. The wind howled and swept away the snow, leaving bare the ice masses on mountains down which swift streams had once run. The great river was ice-locked and silent. An awful stillness came upon the world about us, so that our own cries sounded hoarse and loud. We were cold and starving and, at last, we were forced together in the cave of Hair and Gurr, where there was room for all who remained of us. We gathered much fuel and kept up a fire, about which we huddled, famished and desperate. The end seemed very near.

One night, a storm fiercer than any we had ever known, raged down the valley. From the mouth of the cave we could see but the swirling drifts and hear only the roaring and shrieking of the wind. But at midnight it seemed to me I could distinguish another sound amid the unearthly clamour. It was different from the other noises, a bellowing in which was a note of fear. I had heard the trumpetings of the great mammoths once, and this somewhat recalled the sound, but it could not be. This was no haunt of the monster things, yet from somewhere up the gorge the sound continued, now higher or lower and sometimes moaning and most pitiful. Near morning it ceased entirely, but I must know what it meant. At day-break I started up the gorge with four companions.

We did not have far to go. Fighting our way through, we came to a mighty hollow in which the snow had drifted to a depth many times the height of a man, and there,

plunged deeply, almost buried, was an enormous, brown, hairy mass. It was incredible; it could not be that there had come to us such salvation, but it was true. Here was a strayed mammoth, last of his gigantic kind in the accursed region, caught helpless in the pass and dead, now to our hands!

With shouts of joy that were near to madness we hurled ourselves down upon the mountain of flesh, hewed frantically with our axes and cut out great chunks of meat and bore them to the cave, and there the whole starved company of us roasted and ate until we could eat no more. We could but eat and lie about and sleep and eat, and sleep again throughout all that day and night. And the next day, with much hewing and many burdened journeys, the whole of the vast body was stored within the cave. We were prisoners, but we had food and warmth. Soon all were strong again and there was almost merriment, for we were foolish.

We fed — for we were not many and the body of the mammoth was a monster thing — we fed and lounged before the flames for many days, but we did not think, though the wind still roared outside and the drifts were becoming deeper. I, who should have been wiser than the others — fool that I was — remained as dazed and warm and sluggish as the rest. Surely the trials which had come upon us must have changed me. But at last I woke to an affrighted half-understanding. The heap of mammoth flesh was growing smaller, and warmth, it seemed to me, might never come again. The storm ceased and a cold sun appeared and we could see the way, at least, along the silent valley. We must go or die. I be-

came a furious thing. I leaped about and shouted. I whirled my axe and threatened overmasteringly. I made all left of the following burden themselves with what remained of the flesh and so *drove* them out before me to the southward.

All day long we plodded, and when night fell we harboured, shiveringly, in a vacant cave, and with the next morning took up the journey again, though some fell fainting as we struggled. We left them as they fell, for we could do no more. And then, toward the evening of the third day, I caught my foot in a rock crevice and wrenched my ankle as I lurched, so that I heard the bones crack, and I, the strongest, became in a moment the most helpless of the band. I plunged and floundered ahead in agony. I bellowed as does the bull to his dun following, but my companions did not heed me. We were past all helping and I was left alone. I fell prone in the deep snow and the cold crept upon me. It was bitter cold. And then to me it became less cold, and the snow began falling heavily and softly again, covering me with a warm blanket. I was tired and I could but sleep, restfully, too, as often I had done after some long chase. And I had barely slept when there came to me dreams like the pleasant memories of a thousand years. There were soft skies above me, and waving boughs, and a fragrance in my nostrils. And a laughing, apish face peered at me from between the branches bright with blossoms. And then there came other visions, but dimmer and more senseless, and so I slipped away into all dreamlessness.

CHAPTER III

THE BOWMEN

THE sunlight was filtering down upon me through the broad foliage of a tree of an unfamiliar kind. Birds with hooked bills, brilliant plumage, and squalling voices were flitting among the branches all about. The rank perfume of strange flowers was in my nostrils, and to my ears came a pleasant, distant sound, the softened roar and lapping of waves upon a beach. I was lying in a little glade, wood-surrounded on three sides, but open to the southward. Through the space thus unobscured I could see a blue expanse of sky but nothing more, prone as I was upon the turf, my head resting on what was soft and furry, the folded skin of some wild animal. I was faint and weak; my eyes were opened for a moment only, and then once more I slept. An hour later I awoke again, refreshed and stronger, and, with much difficulty, succeeded in raising myself upon an elbow. My appreciation of things was returning slowly and it seemed to me — I cannot tell why — that I was not alone, that there must be another presence in the glade. I turned my head as well as my position would allow, and looked about me.

Seated upon a little hummock was a woman and, even as I turned, she saw the movement and ran toward me with a glad cry. She was a splendid creature. Tall she

was, and her long hair, thrown back uncombed and tangled, swung down below her slender waist. There was down upon her brown arms and her bare legs, and she moved with the swift grace of the tiger or leopard kind. Her mouth was large, and her teeth gleamed sharply, but it was a fair mouth nevertheless, and her eyes were dark and deep. Her only garment was a soft robe of coney skin passing over one shoulder, and leaving half the full bosom exposed. The robe was held close to her body by a belt of some sort and extended to her knees. Brown she was indeed, a creature of the sun and air and storm, yet her skin was smooth and soft. But it was her eyes I saw. They spoke to me.

The appearance of the woman did not surprise me. It seemed a matter of course that she should be there, and my heart leaped as I looked upon her. I was still dazed, but I knew that she belonged to me. There was a sense of protective ownership of her and of a need of her, this savage beauty whom I might smite if she displeased me, but for whom I would battle to the death. She was beside me in a moment, kneeling with a pitying look in her eyes and beginning at once to unwind the strings of inner bark which held in place a huge bandage around my leg not far above the knee. Very gently and carefully she removed the mass of green, wet leaves covering others nearest the flesh. These macerated into a sort of pulp. Cautiously she lifted the mass and there, in my thigh, I saw a gash which had ceased to bleed but which was raw and open. Nor deep nor dangerous was this wound, but evidently I had lost much blood and so had fallen weak and senseless. As gently as she had taken it away the


woman renewed the bandages with new pulp and leaves and, the binding finished, she looked at me happily.

“The Boar,” she said.

The boar, the savage boar! Yes, I dimly remembered now. There had been a chase somewhere, and the wild boar had charged me, but where were the rest of my tribe, those I had led away from the devouring of the mammoth, to take up the desperate southward quest? Where were the drifting snows and the fierce winds and bitter cold and awful loneliness, the drowsiness and dream of death?

The bandage in its place, the woman sat beside me and stroked my face softly, but only for a little time. She arose quietly, went a little distance away, curled herself down upon the green turf, and seemed to fall asleep on the instant. Then I realized what it meant. She must have been alert and watching throughout the night, and how much longer I could not tell, and so was wearied, if not near to exhaustion. My own strength I felt returning to me, though when I sought to rise to my feet I failed miserably because of the pain the effort brought to my wounded leg. I crawled to the foot of the tree, and leaning my back against the trunk, sought to collect my scattered senses and realize, if I could, the situation. Where could I be? Who, indeed, was I?

As my glance wandered about it was drawn to certain objects upon the ground not two yards away from me. Only one of them was familiar; it was a stone axe, but the haft was of a different wood and colour from that of the axe with which I had slain the great cave bear, and the heavy blade was polished so that it shone in the sunlight.



It was a beautiful axe and I resolved that I must have it, if it were not mine already. Beside the weapon lay something which greatly puzzled me at first. It was a long shaft of some tough wood, but its head was of stone like that of the axe, though of a different shape, long and sharp and pointed and held in the shaft's split end by knotted sinews. At last I comprehended; it must be a spear, but the only spears we had ever known in the land of cold were long sticks sharpened at the end and charred and hardened in the fire. They were but trifling things compared with what this must be in the fight or hunt.

But it was what remained that most aroused my curiosity and perplexed me. There was a stout, springy length of ash, as long nearly as my own height, with the ends bent toward each other and so held by a strong sinewy cord which stretched between them. Lying beside this curious thing was a number of very slender shafts, each notched at one end and bearing at the other a little stone head shaped like that of the spear. I could not understand them and finally gave up the problem. I crawled back to the skin bundle and lay down and slept again.

It had been mid-forenoon when my latest sleep began; when I awoke it was almost night. I was aroused by the call of a pleasant voice beside me, "Scar! Scar!" and the continuous patting of a hand upon my shoulder. I was wide awake and with my mind all restored in an instant.

"What is it, Otter?" I answered.

She laughed joyously. "You know again; you will soon be well. He struck hard, but the cut is not deep. Soon you will run. Your arrows killed him. We will go and eat."

All this she said in short, chattering words and with much gesticulation. It was an odd sort of incomplete speech. She helped me to my feet and I found that I could stand without much difficulty. I managed to hobble along by her side, leaning on her heavily. My wound ceased to pain me and my strength was fast returning. As for my dreams of cold and of other things, such as the great beast buried in the snow, they were but dreams, assuredly.

We came out upon a far extending shore, and there, magnificently coloured in blue and crimson by the sky and the setting sun, extending beyond all vision, heaved the mighty sea. How great was then the later named Mediterranean! Far back where now the desert is, lay its unseen southern shores, and the strand upon which we stood lay farther to the north than when existed kingdoms of later ages. The spectacle was wonderful, but all familiar to me.

We passed slowly along the shore until we reached a rocky place wherein was a little hollow in front of which was burning a fire replenished by my anxious mate while I had slept. Brands for the fire had been brought from our distant cave before my hurt had been received. Otter led me into the little opening and brought flesh of a boar from a hiding place in the rocks and roasted it in the fire and fed me to repletion. Then, having eaten herself as eats a healthy, omnivorous animal of the wild, she coiled down beside me in the little recess, after leaning logs and driftwood against the opening, as some defence against all prowling things. My weapons she placed at my hand.

I awoke in the morning astonishingly refreshed, and

could limp about without the assistance of Otter, and with little pain. We must go inland to where were the ledges and where was our cave among the others. There I could rest easily until all my strength returned. So we took up the slow journey and entered the forest, plodding doggedly along the paths within its depths. We had with us some of the roasted boar's flesh and ate of it when we were hungry.

On the journey we came upon a little open space where were great birds, the bustards, moving about, and I killed one with an arrow, rejoicing the while that I was so good a bowman. Otter carried the huge bird lightly, saying we should have the best of food when we reached our home. My dazedness of the day before, when I failed to recognize my weapons, was all gone now. Was not I, Scar, the greatest archer among my people? Was not Otter, my mate, the greatest in the water of them all? Yet, as to Otter, it had been but a little time since the Cave people had learned to swim. Like the monkeys, which we sometimes shot with arrows in the woods, the Cave men had ever dreaded the water. It was in the days of our great, great grandfathers, so the very old men told us, that the change came, and then by accident.

There had been a wide and deep creek close beside the caves in which our forefathers dwelt, and it had been a great barrier between the rocky country and good hunting grounds on the other side. One day my own great grandfather, when a young man, slipped upon a wet stone and fell into the water and was swept away and they did not even look for him, for in those days he who fell into deep water was drowned, and what good to seek for that

which was gone? But my great grandfather caught hold of a piece of light driftwood, and though it would not lift him entirely, yet, with his chin upon it, his head was sustained above the water until he reached a shallow place where he could wade ashore. He came back to the caves and beat my great grandmother sorely, because she was eating when he returned. He brought back with him the bit of driftwood and thenceforth played in the water with it, tying it beneath his chin and making great strokes with his arms and legs until there came a day when he found, to his wonder, that he did not need the driftwood to sustain him, but could go about in the water as did the otter and the beaver, though never in a way to equal them. And others tried to do as he did, and, though some were drowned, in the end it came that all the Cave people, even the children, could swim. A great advantage was this in the hunt or on a journey of any kind. And among us all, at this time, my mate, my slender Otter, was swiftest in the water. So her name had come to her.

We travelled far this day and crossed many streams and I was nearly spent, when after nightfall we came upon ledges of tumbled rocks uprising near the river and in the midst of a dense wood, and there entered our own cave without arousing any of the people in the other caves. It was not a large cave, but was most comfortable. There was a great bed of moss covered with skins beside one of the brown walls, and from an ash-filled hollow at one side Otter uncovered still glowing embers. In front of this hollow were a lot of stones laid carefully, whereon meat could be roasted. Just inside the cave's entrance, but not large enough to entirely fill it, was a round rock of

sandstone, not too heavy, which Otter alone rolled into the opening. We sought the couch of moss and skins and slept at once, for each of us was weary.

I awoke, it seemed to me, almost well, for from flesh wounds we Cave men recovered swiftly. I awoke with a fragrance in my nostrils. Otter had already risen, and the bustard, cleanly plucked, was roasting on the stones before the fire my mate had built. We ate most of the big bird at that one meal, for we had slept long and were hungry. Then, with Otter beside me, I took my bow and bark quiver of arrows and limped outside the cave. We had hardly come into the sunlight when there came to our ears a shout and the twanging of a bowstring and, a moment later, around a turn in the ravine, appeared the Climber, often my companion in the hunt. He was shooting arrows upward and catching them as they fell, in mere sport, shouting meanwhile to arouse me, for he did not yet know that I had been lamed by the boar. We called to him and he clambered up to us and heard the story of my hunt, laughing only when he heard its issue, for we did not sympathize deeply in that age, though we would sometimes fight for each other valiantly enough. The Climber was armed as I with bow and spear and clad in the same way, with only a clout of skin about his middle. Despite his careless demeanour he had news to bring. Some of the Hill men had been seen lurking about at the foot of the wooded mountain slopes to the westward!

The Hill men were our natural enemies and had been so since a time beyond which none of the old men could remember. They were unlike us in their ways, existing

chiefly on fruit and nuts and roots, which they stored in the mountain caves, where they lived, and they had no bows, carrying only stone axes and long spears. They hunted less than we, but were extremely strong and savage and their numbers made them dangerous. Many a wanderer of the Cave men had disappeared when these hairy savages of the hills had sometimes invaded our side of the river, and word of a threatened raid by them was but a signal for more than ordinary caution.

In a few days I was well again and the fight with the big boar something almost forgotten. There came, for a time, no incident in the life of our scattered group. We hunted and fished and fed well and were warm, for it was a good country and the climate mild. But for old Fang, the arrow-maker, there would have been a pleasant enough monotony to our existence. Fang was more vicious than any of the beasts in the wood; he seemed more like the Things we had never seen, but dreaded, the Things which whispered strangely when the wind blew through the forests at night and which roared and bellowed when the great storms came. He was not like the rest of us. He was the first monopolist, too, the world had ever known.

Our arrows were excellent, not rude chipped things such as our ancestors had known, but smoothed and polished and keen-edged and deadly when launched by a strong arm from a strong bow. A task it was to make an arrow such as one of ours, for there was first the rude chipping and then the weary polishing of the flint by rubbing it upon wetted sandstone. Few of us had patience for all this, and old Fang, who lived alone in a cave in a thicket close beside a little waterfall of the brook running down to

the river, was arrow-maker for most of us. We paid him for the arrows by bringing him meat and skins and all the means for living, and his wicked eyes would gleam when we brought them to him.

He was a misshapen creature, with one leg so distorted that it made him half a cripple, teeth which protruded viciously, and eyes like those of the snakes which sunned themselves upon the clogged driftwood beside the river banks. A great archer he was, but he seldom hunted, for he could but limp, with his twisted leg. At last came a time when he never went abroad at all. It came curiously and in a wicked way.

The fall in the little brook which ran beside the cave of Fang was but three or four yards in height, but the water dropped sheerly and strongly and had worn a little hollow in the stone beneath, a broad bowl a yard across, in which, in a miniature whirlpool, the waters swirled round and round as if aboil. One day a hunter who had brought to Fang some arrow-heads to be polished, accidentally dropped one of them in the water as he leaped the brook above the falls and, counting it lost, paid no attention to it. The keen eye of the arrow-maker had seen the thing and, knowing that the arrow-head could be easily recovered, he said nothing. He would get it for himself.

The old man, busied at his work, forgot the arrow-head for a month, then one day he remembered and found it at last amid the swirling pebbles and looked upon it in astonishment as he drew it forth. Not with all his labour of rubbing the flint heads upon coarse sandstone could he polish an arrow like to this. The sand and peb-

bles in the foaming bowl had done the work far better than could he. An idea came to him. The pool should be his and his alone, and the water and the little pebbles should do his polishing. So he put chipped arrow-heads into the bowl and, after that, the hunters for a time wondered more than ever at the perfection of his work.

One day an old woman leading a child and seeking nuts came close to the edge of the falls and peered over the bank curiously. Her body was found there later and it was plain that an arrow had passed through it, though the shaft could not be found. The child, which had fled shrieking back to the cave, could but tell what the old woman was doing when she fell down. Later, a hunter who lingered carelessly near the pool was shot as ruthlessly, but lived long enough to reach companions to whom he could give no account as to whence the arrow came. But all understood. There was little justice then, and there were no attempts at punishment. The old demon owned the waterfall. As for me, I paid slight heed to the matter. For that I nearly lost my Otter.

One day I had shot an arrow into a wild pig in a wooded height just beyond the cave of Fang and, as I pursued it straightforwardly through the bushes, Otter ran around through an open space to intercept its flight and pierce it with another arrow, if she might, for she shot almost as well as I, though far less strongly. She was near the pool when the pig dashed from the thicket, and she shot at it as I broke through. Then, of a sudden, she shrieked wildly and dropped her bow and I saw her bravely plucking at an arrow which had pierced her arm. It had come from the cave of Fang. I called to Otter, who had al-

ready darted into the bushes, and she came running to me. I drew the arrow forth with little difficulty, for it was not a dangerous wound, though through no fault of the murderous archer. Only Otter's swift step as she shot at the pig had kept the arrow from her body.

We went back into the wood and there I left Otter while I circled about to regain the cave of Fang. I saw him close beside the pool and shot, though it required a long arrow-flight. The shaft lowered with the distance, but pierced him slightly in the thigh, and, with a snarl, he glided into the bushes and behind the trunk of a great tree. A moment later an arrow tossed my hair, and then I, too, went into hiding. We sought glimpses of each other as we circled about, but there was no fair chance afforded until my quiver was emptied and then — for Fang could not run as could I — I rejoined my mate in safety. I knew that either Fang or I must die.

There was little thought of Fang after we had reached the cave. There was heard all about us the cry: "The Hill men! The Hill men!" and there was reason for the alarm. A great band of the mountain savages had just been seen by a hunter, going up the river on the further bank. Well we knew what that portended. They outnumbered us five to one, but the Hill men could not swim and they were going up the river to the first shallow where they could cross in safety. The fording place was where a gorge entered the river through a rock which rose in a long precipice on either side. Into and up this gorge, if they could, must the Hill men come. All the Cave people were now together and we held anxious consultation. It seemed to me that there was but one thing

to do, and in the end all our fighters agreed with me. We must assemble at the mouth of the gorge before the Hill men reached the place and there dispute the crossing to the end; there, with our bows and upon firm ground, we might have some chance against them despite their overpowering numbers. Soon all those capable of fight were on the hurried march, including over half the women. Only the old men and women and the children were left in the caves, since all lives were at stake. Even the vengeful old Fang, who had been summoned, was limping with us, for he was in equal danger with the rest. All night we wound our way along the forest paths and by dawn were in the gorge, where we rested and ate of the dried food brought with us. No Hill men appeared in sight until a little after noon and then they came in what seemed to us a host. There were of us Cave men and women some seventy-five, of the Hill men at least four hundred, fierce looking creatures, armed with spears and stone axes, and terrifying to look upon. Yet our fathers had once beaten them and why should not we? We had a vast store of arrows and good bows, and better spears and axes than had the foe.

They came, bellowing like wild beasts, and we went down the sloping bank to meet them at the crossing. The leader, a huge creature, shaking his spear threateningly, plunged in first and I yelled with delight as I saw, when he reached the middle of the river, that the water rose to his armpits. As he gained a shallower part and upreared his hairy breast, I drove an arrow into it, and his spear fell and he toppled over and was swept down stream. My comrades were doing as well, since there

was room for nearly all of us to shoot; and the slaughter was fairly on! The Hill men seemingly knew no fear. They plunged in from behind by scores and one or two had almost reached our banks when they were speared, one after another, by Bull, the most gigantic of the Cave men, who had rushed in to meet them. Still they came in a desperate, roaring mass. So I have seen a herd of the great aurochs cross a stream mightily. There were not enough of us to do the killing. The waters of the river were red. More than half the Hill men had been slain, but the pack came howling on, now, still more like monstrous wolves. We shot until there was no more time to notch our arrows, and then we waded in a little way and met them with our spears and axes. I had no fear; I was but a raging, blood-thirsty, killing thing! We held them at bay for a time, and so many of them were slain that now they did not more than twice outnumber us, but those of us in front were exhausted by the struggle, and the remnant of the Hill men were still fresh. I staggered back, as another Cave man took my place, and went a little up the slope and refilled my quiver and stood there breathing heavily for a moment with others as spent as I. That breathing space did us good, and well that it was so, for it saved the Cave men. There was a wild cry, a yielding, and our comrades lower down came pressing back upon us. The Hill men had gained the shore! We rallied to the fight, but there could be no more arrow-shooting. It was spear and axe work now. Ever raging in front, the leader of the remaining Hill men was a giant whose spear seemed irresistible, and more than one of the Cave men fell before him. The sight drove me into

a still more murderous craze. I was rested now. I leaped forward to meet the grisly savage and in a moment we were facing, with spears clattering together. It was death for the Hill man! He was stronger, but not so swift as I at this deadly fencing, and, as I turned his spear aside, I leaped in and drove my own cleanly through him. He toppled with a roaring growl, like that of a bear dying, and, with that, a panic came upon the Hill men and they turned and fled, pursued and speared as they floundered in the waters of the river. The fight was over!

And then, just then, as I lifted my hand to my streaming face, something smote me fiercely in the back and I looked dazedly at an arrow-head which protruded from my breast. I turned, tottering, to see the stone axe of the Climber crash down into the head of the glaring Fang, who crumpled weakly to the ground, and to see Otter running toward me, screaming and with arms outstretched. Then I pitched forward upon my face.

CHAPTER IV

THE CLANSMEN

IT WAS dark, absolutely dark, and I could hear no sound. I could not remember who I was nor where I was, and there came upon me something like a feeling of alarm, though I felt that to be afraid of anything was most unlike me. Furthermore, I was in pain; there was a hurt in my breast and, instinctively, I clutched at the place with my hand. Ah! I knew what it must be — a protruding arrow-head — and I strove to get such a hold upon it that I could pull it forth in the hope that so relief would come, but I could not get my grasp upon the thing. What had become of it? My mind wandered in a search for all about me and an understanding of it. I had a dreamy vision in my mind of some rocky gorge, of enemies coming up from a sloping river bank, of a desperate struggle there, and of my own part therein, which seemed to end with a murderous bowshot from behind, driving a shaft through my body; but what had happened afterward? Where had they carried me and how could I be living after such fearful hurt? I fumbled still at my breast seeking the arrow-head, and found at last what I had mistaken for it. It was but a jagged piece of flint which had slipped in between my flesh and the rough skin coat I wore and which, as I had borne upon it, turning in my sleep, had pricked me sharply and awakened me. There was

no arrow-head nor trace of wound. I could not understand it, but I no longer feared; I only realized that I was cold. I felt about me in the darkness and my hands fell upon what I recognized as the skins of animals, and I drew them together and over me from head to foot and was warm and slept again. When I awoke the darkness was not so dense; light came in through an opening not far away and I could distinguish objects about me.

I lay upon the floor in a sort of niche in a cave. Weapons, as I judged them to be, leaned against the wall opposite, and away beyond them, close to the wall, lay a gray heap over which I puzzled. I studied it at first dreamily and then curiously, as the light grew stronger from the narrow arched entrance, then started half upright, for the gray thing seemed alive. It heaved uneasily and I forgot my own perplexity as to who I was or where I was in watching the mysterious thing. All at once the mystery was solved. The mass separated, part of it upheaved, and then I understood. There had been a man sleeping there, like me, beneath a heap of wolf skins. As he arose he turned his face toward me and called out hoarsely but cheerily enough: "Oo-ee! Scar!"

"Oo-ee," I answered back instinctively. I knew that his call was but to learn if I were awake and I knew, too, that I was his friend and comrade. I became instantly another being from the one lying dazed and dreaming the moment before. The thought of all that dim vision of some fight at a ford and my own awful hurt there, passed as the smoke goes when the wind sweeps over a fire, and swift, keen memory of all that related to my present relations and surroundings returned to me at

once. Why, there we were in our cave, Six Toes and I, and it was morning. I called out to him:

"I am hungry, Six Toes; let us eat."

He grinned, went over to the back of the cave, drew forth strips of dried meat from a store heaped up there, and I, getting to my feet at the same time, took from the weapons by the wall our two stone axes. We sat down together, hacked away fragments of the cold, hard meat, and ate as ravenously as two wild animals.

It was all simple enough. Why had I so awakened still dreaming of a river and a fight in a region warm and pleasant? Certainly in such a country I had never lived, though dreams of it had come to me before and I was in no such country now. Here was I with Six Toes, at murderous odds with others of our kind and with a prospect ahead of us as dangerous as uncertain. Not that it worried us much. We were only less reckless of what was to come than the prowling creatures of the swift, ever-fearing grass-eaters of the plains.

Six Toes was tall and strong, and so, indeed, was I, though not so great of bulk as he. He was a huge man, though springy as the reindeer, and the crush of his hairy arms was something to be feared in any grapple. We were garbed nearly alike, each in a single garment made of skin reaching from neck to knee, with holes for the arms and belted at the waist with a thong of rawhide. The garment of Six Toes was of a single bearskin; mine of wolfskin well stitched together with long sinews. In each of our belts whenever we left the cave was a stone axe, and each bore as well his bow and arrows, and sometimes his flint-headed spear. In a skin pouch hanging

from the belt in front we carried the smaller things — the stone, skinning and cutting knife, and, it might be, dried meat. Our arrows we carried in skin quivers slung across our backs. We had no other clothing or weapons or gear of any kind, but our axes and our arrow-heads and knives were sharp and polished and our bows were strong. The Cave men everywhere had learned many things.

We two were not in a good way, even as ways went with the Cave men in that rough land and time. We were outlaws — I, Scar, and Six Toes, a greater personage than I, and all because of the deadly enmity between my companion and the head man of our clan. We had been driven from the great galleried cave in the cliff beside the river a mile above us where all had sought refuge together for the harsh winter, and, thus forced to fare alone, had, after some perilous wandering, found shelter in this smaller and less pleasant and safe abode. We were cold, but in this respect not so greatly worse off than the body of the clan who, through rare misfortune, were, temporarily, nearly as unfortunate as we. The winter was upon us. Long ago, so the legend of the story-telling old men ran, our people had drifted to the south, where was a warmer clime, but something had driven them northward again and they had long lived a roving, sturdy, and fierce community in a country of rock and plain, fruitful in season, it is true, and with good hunting, peopled as it was by many grass-eating brutes and furred beasts of prey, and warm as well, but hard to bear in winter because of the breath of northern glaciers.

Now, the clan had been for a time in a strait such as was never known before. Venturing, because of an unac-

countable influx of the deer and the little wild horses, into a ruder country than our ordinary haunts, we had lost our fire. There were no fire mountains here, and, despite the finding of the big cave, living had become uncomfortable. We had not yet learned the art of making fire ourselves, and, when the clan moved as a body, carried it always with us, moving slowly and making fires ahead on our way as far as the runners could go with brands. Now, it had, for once, been neglected by the keepers in the cave and become lost, and we must half freeze and live on roots and nuts and dried meat until we should visit some distant clan, or the fire from the sky, as it sometimes did, should smite some towering dead tree and make it burn for us. But no such good fortune had come, and those of our own kind of whom we knew were far removed from us, and sometimes hostile. We must endure until the warm time came again.

The little cave in which Six Toes and I — he was called Six Toes because he had, when a youth, left four of his toes in the jaws of a savage river fish, though the hurt did not impair his strength or swiftness — were harbouring was close to the edge of a declivity which overhung the river valley. We were savagely restless and discontented, and not without great reason. Not only against the bear and wolf and prowling tiger of the time must we be on guard, but against even the creatures of our own kind and clan.

The deadly enmity between Six Toes and the chief among the Cave men was all because of Laugh, the shrewd and swift and always merry daughter of old Hairy, desired by the huge leader, Wolf, and desired also by Six

Toes, my friend, he who had found me a child abandoned by some wandering tribe and who had reared me as his younger brother, teaching me all his craft of field and fight, and making of me one not lightly to be encountered. With him and beside him in all stress I would always be. So it had come that we were one in our watchful exile.

There had been harsh action in the great cave. Wolf and Six Toes had each asked old Hairy for his daughter, and the old man, fearing Wolf the more, had rather favoured him, while the girl as far as she might dare, inclined to the other man. The time had come in the history of the Cave men when a woman could scarcely be taken by force and, next to Wolf, Six Toes was the most important man among us. Then came the craft which was our undoing. Wolf and his immediate and obedient following accused us of a great crime — forever I was counted one with Six Toes — of having stolen and hidden in the wood for our own use a store of weapon heads, than which there was no more valued possession in the community. Of the rarest flint, polished and keen, were these arrow-heads and spear-heads, fashioned with infinite care and toil by the men too old for hunting, and counted, rightly, among our best possessions, for arrows were often lost in the hunt or carried away by wounded beasts. To steal of these reserves, as they were to be dealt out fairly from the common store at need, was death. Boldly had Wolf made the accusation against us — though, as the end proved, he had hidden the arrows himself — and had so inflamed all the men that we escaped the stern penalty only by sudden flight. As crafty as he was fierce and vicious was the big Wolf.

We had found the little cave in which we were now concealed, and in a way intrenched, for none could force the narrow entrance; had found good hunting, and so, gloomily but healthily enough, we abode together, planning, it seemed vainly, some scheme of retribution. We chafed and raged, thus helpless, like the great wild elk with antlers caught in the thicket, or the huge bear sometimes imprisoned in a pitfall of the rocks. The life we led was trying; in some unguarded moment we might be stolen upon and slain by Wolf and his followers, and, besides, our little cave was colder than the other. The life was hardly endurable. Some change must come; upon that we were resolved alike and bitterly. And, when the change came, it came swiftly — in a single hour — with the holding of a new power in our hands, something never known before and bringing great happenings with it. It was a simple thing, but wonderful and most mysterious.

One somewhat cold but glittering afternoon, having eaten lightly of our stored raw meat and nuts, we were lounging in front of the cave, where it was warmer than inside. I was moving about listlessly, noting the tracks made in the snow by lurking beasts and calling once in a while to Six Toes, who sat upon a little rock enjoying the sunshine and fumbling idly with bits of shining stone which he had found beside him. One of these bits he held for some time in his hand, turning it carelessly about. It was thin at the edges, roughly oval in shape and singularly clear. In the centre on each side it rose outward, smooth and even. It was somewhat like a transparent arrow-head and I remember that, as I came to the side of Six Toes, I wondered if we could not put it to some such

use. A flake of stone just like it I had never seen before. Then, as Six Toes turned the stone in his hands, a darting yellow gleam fell on the snow, and he laughed as he found that by moving the flake he could shift the shining spot at will. At last he turned it upon one of his own bare feet and in sheer curious foolishness held it there in one place steadily. But not for long. Suddenly he leaped up with a howl and flung the thing away as alarmedly as if it were one of the little adders we did not like but sometimes found hidden amid the leaves where the nuts were on the ground. Something had bitten or burned his foot!

I ran to where the stone had fallen and picked it up and examined it closely, but could find nothing strange about it except its odd shape and clearness. How could I know, how could Six Toes know, that he had stumbled upon the first natural burning-glass that men had ever known, a flake of tourmaline brought perhaps with a boulder from the far north in some ancient glacial move — a tourmaline, the only stone which flakes in such a way!

If we had little wisdom, we had at least unbounded curiosity. We played with the curious thing and the yellow spot it made, and, finally, I held the spot upon the stalk of a dry weed. I held it so for quite a time and then the wonder happened! There came a darkening of the weed's fibre, next a faint smoking, and then, suddenly, a flame. We yelled aloud our amazement and triumph as we danced about. We were beside ourselves with joy. We had Fire!

We wasted no time then. We gathered armfuls of the stout dry weeds and laid them carefully upon the one now burning and added such fagots of dead wood as we

could find. Soon we had a bonfire and we kept it going. Fire, fire in abundance! We could not contain ourselves, for we knew all that it meant — warmth, always warmth, and the fragrance and rich taste of cooked flesh. I dashed within the cave and brought out great slabs of the cold meat, and we sharpened long thick weeds and thrust the meat into the glowing embers until it curled and browned and the odour and savour of it were in our nostrils, and then we ate! We ate as if famished, for never, it seemed to us, had been so great a feast before. It brought new life and courage.

Gorged at last, we had yet energy to go out among the reeds and gather more armfuls of them and stack them near at hand for use, and then we clambered down the precipice at a place not far distant where we could reach the river bank, and brought up driftwood, and so we worked furiously until nightfall and until we had a great store of fuel. Then we made another fire, inside the cave, and warmed it, and there we ate more meat. In all that region there were no others so fortunate as we. We were boastfully merry. Outside, we renewed our fire upon the very edge of the precipice — for that we had a reason — and throughout the night we fed it in turn, one while the other slept, and the light leaped high in the darkness, a flaming defiance to our enemies. What would they think of it, they in the great cave? It was not long before we learned.

They had seen the flash of fire, as the night fell, and their amazement could not be told. Then came a rage. Six Toes and Scar had fire, and Wolf and all the band had none and were cold and ate raw meat. The thing was

unendurable! The outcasts should yield up their great possession, and with early dawn half a score of the Cave men, led by Wolf, would come storming down the valley to kill the outlaws and bring fire to where it was most needed.

As morning broke we saw them coming, for they could not remain concealed against the snowy background. We knew their errand well, and Six Toes laughed loudly, but the laugh was as ugly as the cough of the lank hyena which cried sometimes in the wastes. We heaped on more fuel and made the fire blaze merrily, but we saw to it that it was at the very edge of the shelf of the rock. Six Toes brought out his spear and I stood beside him with my bow, an arrow clutched on the string.

They came rushing toward us, armed and fierce, and we waited until they were not two hundred yards away. Then Six Toes, with shoves and sweeps of his long spear, hurled every particle of fire from off the ledge, to be utterly quenched in the deep snow of the far depths below. We leaped for the cave's shelter and stood inside with notched arrows and drawn bows. Eager for a sight of them we were, but could not get it. Even Wolf would not venture fairly in front of that dark, narrow entrance. Death was waiting to leap out.

We called to them and jeered at them, but there came no answer. Finally I ventured to peer forth cautiously, and saw our enemies gathered just out of bowshot. They stood there, baffled and raging, and we came into sight and howled out insults. We yelled taunting allusions to those who hungered for the taste of roasted flesh but not for the taste of sharp arrows from a cave. We gibed

and mocked, until maddened, they started toward us, and then we sought the cave again, only to come forth once more as they moved, and yelp out things concerning those who had no fire and must eat raw meat and shiver all the time. They could do nothing but shake their weapons and threaten, and at last they stalked away sullenly.

The sun was shining, and later in the day we built a fire outside again and laid on wet leaves to make a towering smoke which they in the great cave might see. How they must marvel, we thought, and so we later learned. Where did we get our fire? Was it possible that Six Toes had become a wizard — for of such beings there were stories even then — a medicine man such as had been heard of, one who was familiar with the strange things in the water and in the forest and, above all, with the Black Things in the clouds which sometimes made streaks of fire when the storms came? Yes, it must be so; and there were perplexity and apprehension. What might not Six Toes do next?

But not for long could such a state of things exist. There were venturesome men among the hunters, and Wolf did not believe in wizards. Furthermore, it was in his mind that Laugh was more inclined toward his rival than to him. He had been too negligent. The fire must be secured and Six Toes and Scar slain speedily!

Meanwhile our own wrath grew. Was it not enough that we had been driven from the tribe, wanderers on the waste, lonely as outlying wolves, without now being hunted down as if we were wolves indeed? As our rage increased, we devised a plan of vengeance.

As I have told, the slight ledge in which was our cave projected out upon a narrow shelf which overhung the valley. This tongue of rock held the cave almost at its very end, the opening extending back but a few yards, while the walls were of slight thickness. Because of these thin walls there came to us a great idea. We would cut holes in them and thus have a view on either side, up or down the valley, and from them, too, send murderous, unexpected arrows. The stone was soft and the openings were soon chipped through with our hard flint axes. We hunted stealthily and at night only, for we feared a possible surprise, and slew one of the little wild horses and a deer and hacked them apart and stored away the meat, and ever carefully within the cave we nursed a slight fire, for the wonderful stone, we had now learned, would not bring flame in the darkness nor when the sky was dull. So, with food and warmth provided and weapons at our hands, we awaited with little patience the time of certain fray. Each day we built our flaunting fire outside and cooked our meat there. We knew the fight would come. It came soon and in a way we had not thought of.

I must tell here of what I learned afterward. There was new trouble in the great cave. Wolf had again demanded Laugh for his wife, and her father, the aged and feeble Hairy, could not protect her if he would. She was in a desperate strait, but a most resolute maiden and a daring one was Laugh, and she at this time resolved swiftly and desperately. She had watched longingly the distant smoke. She would flee to Six Toes, who was, at heart, her choice. Besides, had he not fire and roast meat, and, oh, how good roast meat was!

Little preparation had the girl to make. She wrapped her few belongings tightly in a skin which she fastened to her back with thongs, and then, one morning, just as the light was coming and the dangerous creatures of the night had sought their hiding-places in the hills and forests, she glided from the cave, at first unnoticed, and began her run. The sun was shining all over the snow fields and down the valley now, but she relied upon her swiftness. A fourth of the way she had gained when Wolf, suspicious concerning her and ever watchful, seeking her early, found that she was not with her father, and, rushing from the cave, at once perceived her in the distance. He knew what her flight portended. He seized his weapons with a bellow, shouted to his immediate followers, and bounded forth in hot pursuit.

Fleeter of foot than most of the Cave women was Laugh, but the fall of snow had not been light and she was not as strong and tireless for such hampered run as were the angry ones pursuing her. They gained upon her almost from the first, and her flight became more straining, though she did not falter. Bravely, if even gaspingly, she ran, but when she attained the slope which led upward to the awaiting shelter the rushing Wolf was scarce a dozen yards behind, though here on the wind-swept ascent the snow became lighter and Laugh almost held her own. Then she did what alone saved her. She yelled as only a Cave woman can yell, which meant much, and Six Toes, leaping to the porthole, saw it all. He rushed to the cave entrance, I at his heels.

It was a close finish — there could be no doubt of that. Wolf's final swift rush told as they neared the cave, as

with outstretched hand he almost succeeded in clutching the fleeing girl as she dived into the opening of the cave. Six Toes caught her in his arms as she came, and I sent an arrow whistling outward, but Six Toes was in my way and Wolf leaped aside unhurt. Then came a few moments' pause. Laugh was safe within the cave. Wolf and his followers, who had by this time joined him, were gathered just aside from the entrance in noisy council. We waited alert and hungrily, for we knew that our time of vengeance was at hand, I guarding the cave opening, Six Toes at the porthole on the left.

As they conferred excitedly the party of Wolf moved farther to the side and I crept nearer and nearer to the mouth of the cave. I knew there would be happenings. Then I heard the voices moving more to the side and ran back into the cave again and looked over Six Toes' shoulder. Suddenly the men outside moved again, and there, now they stood, not six yards from the point of Six Toes' arrow, Wolf, with his broad back to it, waving his arms and commanding violently. Never was fairer mark offered a Cave man and never a deadly opportunity seized upon more eagerly. Slowly Six Toes drew the long shaft backward until the stone head touched the great bow, which creaked and groaned beneath the strain; then he released it!

There was a tearing thud; Wolf threw up his hands and stood wavering there with a short length of the knotted wood jutting from his back. For a moment he swayed and trembled, and then pitched forward as dead as the deer and the little wild horse stored beside us in the cave. With a yell of terror his followers started up the valley

and I bounded out from the cave and sent an arrow after them as they ran. I could hear the "thut" and one of them began to run waveringly and laggardly. It was a fine shot.

It was good to see Laugh eat. Little cared she what we were doing. The smell of roasted meat had assailed her, and she was gnawing greedily at a bone with cooked flesh still upon it as we turned to look upon her, still flushed from the race. She looked up at Six Toes and laughed happily. Then he, too, laughed and sat down beside her. They were mated now, and were content.

So, for a few days, there were no happenings of note. Six Toes and Laugh were cheerful in their end of the cave, and I only less so in a little alcove at the side where I slept now dreamlessly. Laugh helped in the skinning of the game. We brought and cooked the flesh and kept ever a sharp lookout up and down the valley. Did Laugh become lax in any of her duties, Six Toes, as a husband should, admonished her with a strip of hide, but she rarely needed such correction, and his strokes were light, for were they not newly wed? I alone became, finally, somewhat restless. I felt that there was more to come, not that I feared it, but I was curious. The half-freezing tribe would soon be heard from.

We had not long to wait. Following the death of Wolf there had been much debate in the great cave. Evidently Six Toes was a wizard, and evidently a great wizard was a good thing for a clan to have. Besides, Six Toes was a famous hunter and a man of might, and why not yield to him?

They came, one day, a straggling group, including even

the older men, and I, who guessed their mission as I saw them in the distance, conferred swiftly with Six Toes and advised him earnestly. They halted at a distance from the cave and yelled forth the nature of their visit and then, assured of safety, laid down their weapons and came forward. Six Toes, I standing beside him, received them somewhat gruffly. They said that they were cold and that he could make fire for them; as they were leaderless, too, would he not return to them?

Six Toes was stern but not unfriendly. He said that they were right. He was a wizard and could make fire. They were leaderless, because he had slain Wolf. He could slay others. He had been driven forth from the band, he and his brother Scar, but he would not remain angry with them if they would take him as a wizard and as the head of the clan and so obey him. If they disobeyed, well, he could burn all enemies. The sun was shining and he drew forth the fire-stone from his pouch and set into flame the bundle of dry reeds I brought. The sight startled and appalled them, and some of the old men even grovelled at his feet. All yielded wildly and blindly and, the young men carrying our belongings, Six Toes and Laugh and I in the lead, we took our way to the great cave of many galleries where the remainder of the band received us with mingled fear and joy. Then Six Toes made fire outside and lighted from it, other fires soon blazed within the great cave's chambers, and meat was roasting everywhere, and there were warmth and feasting and rejoicing.

There were hosts of wild things for the hunting, the band had stores of nuts and roots, there were fire and

warmth, and the winter passed in comfort for the Cave man. There came the spring and summer and the brown autumn, and in all our wanderings with Six Toes at our head we had fire at need, and the clan flourished beyond the ordinary lot of the wild man of that time. Next to Six Toes, I was the strongest and starkest man among them, and it came to me that, like him, I would take a wife. There was a girl, Black Eye they called her, who was most holding of desire to look upon. She I resolved to take, and I knew, from the looks she sometimes gave me, that she would come willingly. I was content in those days.

None other of all the band was so soft of foot as I when need came. I could thread the wood without the crackling of a twig. I could creep as silently as the forest cats which caught the birds upon the ground; I could steal so close to any creature that, if it saw me not, nor smelled me, I could come to stand beside it and impale it with a close driven arrow or even with my spear. So I wanted no clumsy-footed companion with me to mar the outcome when I hunted, and, save when we sought the fiercer creatures, rarely went forth other than alone.

One day it chanced that I was creeping upon a flock of ptarmigan feeding in a thicket where were many berries. Already, in another place I had killed a number of them, and cared little whether I shot more of them or not. Glancing about as I so crept along, I saw what interested me. Upon one of the bushes with a foliage darkly green hung great clusters of berries not scarlet, like those the birds ate and which we ate ourselves, but of a purple such as I have never seen before. They were wonderful. Surely, I thought, they must be better than the smaller

red things, richer and more luscious. I tasted them and found them sweet and musky and fragrant, and, yielding, I gorged myself from their abundance, and then lay down upon the dry grass in a little open space, to rest and dream, and, it might be, sleep, for there came a sort of languor over me and sleep seemed good. I lay there dozing when I heard a fluttering of birds about me and reached for my bow and tried to rise, but could not. My legs refused to aid me and my arms seemed heavy. There came a doubt upon me. We had learned that there were poison things, though never had I known them in this region, and surely berries so luscious could not be harmful. But I cared not. I seemed in another world. What to me that fruit I had eaten was of the deadly things?

I lay there helpless, but in no pain. The drowsiness which deepened brought curious scenes and fancies. Then the visions dimmed and I drifted deeper into the sleep from which I might not waken. Steadily all faded. It was done. Not for me was it to hunt or fight with Six Toes to the end. Not for me to take my mate and live the full Cave man's life; not for me to be with the brave clan as it waxed in numbers and in strength until it became the greatest in all that changing region of what men call the Dardogne Valley, where our spear and arrow-heads are sometimes dug from deep in the earth, and where little children prattle in the vineyards.

CHAPTER V

THE BOATMEN

WHEN it is warm there is no sound sweeter to me than the sound of splashing water. It was such a sound that came to my ears as I awoke from my sleep on a little leaf-covered mound, beneath the boughs of a thicket-surrounded beech tree on a gently sloping and wooded hillside. I knew that near me a brook came hurrying down the slope, and that it was its rejoicing that I heard as it tumbled in little cataracts along its stony bed. It had worn the stone for centuries, and had accomplished much on its way to the deep waters of which it was in search; but of such matter of course I did not think as I opened my eyes and realized what were my surroundings. I knew that I was content and sound and full of vigour, though only half awake as yet, but somehow I was puzzled. Of what had I been dreaming, and which was the real, and which the unreal? I seemed at home where I was, and yet it seemed but an hour ago that there were birds,—birds which were good to eat, about me, and that there were sweet berries, and that I had eaten them, and then had gone to sleep. But there were no birds about me now, and there were no berry bushes. The beech tree was familiar, and so were the singing and laughing of the water. I was in my own place and well. What foolish things are dreams!

There came a long call, — “Co-ee! coo-ee!” — from a distance below me, and the sound was most familiar. It was the call of Droopeye, close friend and companion of mine, though not, it may be, so near to me as Thin Legs the wise one, upon whom I relied concerning many things of which I was in doubt. But I cared much for the merry Droopeye, who made one forget the heavy thoughts which would come at times, and we were often together in our hunting or any other of the journeys made by us, the men of the water caves.

I was glad to hear the summons of Droopeye — he was called so because he had had a hurt in his youth such that one eyelid drooped, and gave him an odd look — since there had come to me strange dreams as I slept there beside the brook which tumbled down the hillside into the lake. I wonder why it is that I have always had strange dreams? Queer and singular they have been, not like those dreamed by my tribesmen, as they have told them to me. They dream of the hunt or the fishing or of the men and women among us; but I do not dream of such things. My dreams are such as I cannot understand; for they are of places and people and ways ever different from what is all about me, of men and women and lands and beasts I have never seen, of countries of hot sands and mighty deserts, or deep, steaming jungles, or cold lands of ice and snow, or of mighty forests where were no men at all, but only fierce, wild creatures upon the ground, and in the treetops other creatures looking somewhat like men indeed, but living in lofty nests, and ever fearful of the beasts below. I do not understand these dreams, and they make me wonder, with almost a little fear. Before

the call of Droopeye I had dreamed of a far land of caves and people somewhat like our own, it is true, but with ruder spears and bows and arrows, and with some trouble in the making of fire, which has become to us so easy. And it seemed to me, too, that in my dreams I had myself been in some great peril, but I remembered it only dimly.

So, when I awoke to the call of Droopeye, I answered lustily and leaped to my feet, and met him as he came running up the slope from the shining water. He held in his hand a wonderfully bright shell, which he had found upon the shore, and which he showed to me laughingly.

It is hard to say why I, so different in all my ways, should care at all for the companionship of such a man as Droopeye, who was not the best aid in the hunt, and who could not run as fast or far as I, nor send an arrow from his bow so surely and so strongly. But I liked to have him with me, to hear his merry words, often, it seemed to me, not at all unwise, and to laugh at his shots, when, as he often did, he missed the little standing deer upon which he had crept unseen, or the great bustard which offered so fair a mark. Surely a poor bowman was Droopeye, though a good fisherman, and knowing as to all the roots and fruits and berries which were fit for eating. So I liked to have him with me in the forest or in the hills, despite his uselessness in the hunt, and cared for him as I have seen some great wild beast endure and seem to care for a lesser one about him. Ever ready was Droopeye to build the fire with the hard pointed stick twisted with the bowstring into the dried, punky wood, and he was

ready in the skinning and in carrying his burden of whatever might be our spoil to the distant camp.

It was Droopeye who first learned to make sounds upon stretched skins, which drew to him the younger men and the girls, and made them utter odd singing noises, and want to skip about. Very curious was this thing. We had been at work upon the skin of a groundhog, one time, scraping it clean of all flesh, and making it fit for use as some sort of pouch, and when we had done this Droopeye stretched it across the end of a short hollow length of log which chanced to be lying near his hut, that it might dry there flat and firm until he should take it off to knead and stretch into softness, as was the way. It was pinned tightly with strong thorns driven through its edge into the wood, and there it dried, flat and taut and firm. Then, one day, when I was with him, Droopeye remembered the skin he had left out in the sun to dry so, and brought it to the entrance of the hut, where he took a seat beside me, preparing to pull out the thorns, and make the skin soft again by kneading. We were talking, and he forgot for the time about the skin, playing with a short, hard stick he had chanced to pick up as we talked. At last he lifted the short length of log — it was light and thin and very dry — and, in idleness, hit the skin a smart blow with the stick he held. The sound made us both leap to our feet, it was so loud and odd and booming in a queer way. Again and again did Droopeye hit the skin, and each time came the booming sound, and others came running to see what it was.

“I will not take off the skin,” said Droopeye then. “I will keep the sounding thing to play with.”

And this he did; and it came, at last, that he fastened a skin across the other end of the little dried hollow log, and the booming was increased, and a great thing finally came of this, for, in time, a bigger length of hollow log was taken, and chipped and scraped smooth inside and outside, and when other skin was stretched and fastened tightly across the ends, and the thing was beaten, the booming drumming could be heard from afar, and we had a means of summons for all the tribe should any time of peril come.

But the sounding upon the skin was not all that came of this queer discovery of Droopeye. It so pleased him that he tried stretching more skins across hollow things, making still different sounds, and other sound-making things he tried. Finally he stretched a bowstring of sinew above the half of a great dried wild gourd upon which a skin was stretched, and it made a twanging which pleased him much, though the sound was not at all like that of the beating upon the drum.

Then to Droopeye came another fancy, for he was ever different from the rest of the tribe, in thinking of that which might be strange and new. There was a boy so pinched of face that he was called the Rat, and this Rat was so charmed by the noise that Droopeye made with his new things that he was hovering about constantly when the sounds were made. Him Droopeye taught to strum upon the sinew stretched across the gourd, and soon they would make the new and strange noises together and at night — that is, in the early night, when the hunters and others had returned to camp, and had eaten — there would always be a swift clustering around the players,

though I cannot tell why this was so. The strumming noise seemed to touch the feet of those who listened, and they moved uneasily, and would often shout when the sounds came swiftly and regularly together in some way I had never heard before. Very odd it was to see them thus swaying together, sometimes clapping their hands as the sounds came, and at last they would caper and circle about, stepping as came the sounds, and all were delighted with it. So came what Droopeye said was the first music, and, whatever it may be, it assuredly was marvellous.

Such a merry man was Droopeye, whose call I answered, and with whom I often went to the huts and caves of our little village by the lake in the hills. He had done a wonderful thing, but nothing so wonderful as that which Thin Legs and I did, and which proved so great a thing for all the tribe.

Never before, so the old men said, had the Cave people been more quiet and prosperous; for we had a good region in which to live, the winters were not so white and hard as they were in the times of which the old men say their fathers' forefathers told, and there were fewer of the great man-eating wild beasts. Very huge and dangerous were these beasts once, and even at this time it was not good to meet the great bear or the tree leopard, or the wolf pack, or even the huge lone wolf which sometimes crouches by the woodpaths at night, and springs out upon and tears the throat of the unwary. Once such a wolf sprang out upon me; but I throttled him, though my arms were torn, and I was sick and weak for many days. The teeth of the old wolf are very long; but I am strong, and my grip is crushing.

We had not been at war with any other tribe since I was a youth, and we had not been driven away from the camping place by the great floods which sometimes came in the past times, and so we had thriven here, and had done many things. There were the boat and the barb!

Very well do I remember how the first boat came. It was after a great storm, before which I had been hunting with One Ear far up the river which runs to the sea, and to which one now paddles through the lake from which the creek runs to our smaller lake about which were our huts and caves. The water had come in a vast flood, and had caught us in the distant valley, and we had climbed into a tree, that we might not drown, and there we crouched and clung throughout the night. When morning came we could see nothing but the tops of other trees and the great waters. We were weak and hungry. We must leave the tree or die; and, when a log big enough to carry us both came closely by, we dropped down upon it together. We were swept into the deep water, and tossed about in eddies, and tangled and delayed, but not for a very long time. We were going straight toward a little island I knew well, though only its bare crest now showed above the waters.

We stranded against the island's shore, and crawled up a little way, and rested, lying very still, for there was little life left in us. At last I rose and looked about, and then I shook One Ear by the shoulder, and shouted loudly. There was game upon the little island, game imprisoned by the flood. There were hares, a score of them; and we slew them with our axes, for they could not escape, and fed upon them, for we were famished. Then we slept, and

it was night when we awoke. We were hungry still, and ate and slept again until the morning came.

The storm was ended, but not the flood. We could see no land except the little space on which we were, and even that was lessening. What should we do? We ate more of the hare, and sat down upon the sand, and One Ear became sad, and howled as the lone wolf sometimes does. The sound was not good to me, for it made me sorrowful, and I threw my axe at him, but did not hit him. Nevertheless, he ceased his howling.

It was mid-afternoon when I saw coming down the river what seemed to float higher on the water than did the other things. As it neared us, I recognized it as something I had seen before. It was only a log, but it turned up at the ends, and rode high in the water, because it was hollow throughout most of its length, and nearly to its bottom.

Often had I seen that curious log in my hunting far up the river, and well I understood what had made it as it was. The old sycamore which had stood so long beside the river had been blown down, and in falling had struck an uprearing jagged rock, which broke it in two not far from its torn stump. This part of the trunk rolled aside a little way, a log of three men's length and not straight, but curved upward a little at each end, for the tree had grown crookedly. The log had lain there long, as I had seen it, and become dry and light, and the middle, on its upper side, had become a little rotten and wormy. Then came the great crested woodpecker, the bird which calls so loudly, who hammered and bored away in search of grubs until he had left there a furrow of dry dust and

chips. The big pine tree which stood near the sycamore was smitten by the lightning, and sparks from its flaming top had fallen on the dust on the log left by the woodpecker, and so the fire upon the log burned, eating its way deeply downward and extending either way. It had almost reached the ends, and was nearly through the sides and bottom of the log, when a torrent of rain fell, and there was no more fire, but still left of the log a big charred and hollow thing, at the look of which I had often wondered. But I had thought it worthless. Of what use was a charred and hollow log?

It floated so high that, as it grounded on the beach of the little island, it came easily within reach of our hands, and we pulled it ashore. We chattered foolishly over it, and then, all at once, to each of us, came the thought that the thing might carry us more easily than the heavier log which had brought us to where we were. We must leave the island or starve. There were no more hares. We put the log in the water again, and I held it by an end while One Ear waded out and got astride it. Then a new thought came to him, and he lifted his legs and dropped squattingly into the great hollow the fire had made, and looked up at me, and cackled excitedly. The log floated, and yet he was away from the water! I clambered in beside him with a shout, the current caught us and carried us away, and then we yelled together in our exultation. We were floating, warm and dry, and resting. We would have suffered, clinging desperately to the log, with our bodies in the chill water, and, it might be, fallen off and drowned. It was wonderful! Never had men floated thus before, and we were great men indeed! Swiftly we

were carried toward the promontory afar down where were the caves where we and our people dwelt. Close in, just at nightfall, the current swayed us, and we leaped out as we reached the shallows, and dragged our prize ashore, while the clan gathered about us, all chattering and wondering. We had what we came to call a Boat!

We ate much and slept soundly, after this our great peril and great discovery. In the morning followed another gathering of the Cave people about the strange thing which could carry men safely upon the water; and he who could draw pictures of wild creatures on the rocks, and who could chip spear-heads most wisely of us all, was the one who looked upon the fire-hollowed log longest and most earnestly, though he at first was silent. Then finally he came to me. A boat seemed to be a good thing. Why not have another boat? What fire had done, fire could do!

Not far from the caves, and close by the shore of the currentless lagoon which reached in from the river, lay the trunk of a large fallen tree. Our stone axes were good, so Thin Legs said, but might not suffice to make a boat like that brought by One Ear and me; but surely we could in time hack off a log, and then make the fire which warmed us and cooked our food do the rest. So we fell to work eagerly, all the strong men of the clan coming to aid in turn. It was long work and wearing, and there were tired arms and blistered hands, but within two days the log was hacked away from the trunk of the fallen big tree, and then Thin Legs alone took leadership, and fire was brought.

Very wise is Thin Legs. None of the rest of us can think as he does; none of us can so tell what is going to



“With long poles thrust to the bottom, we guided the boats here and there about the shallow waters.”

happen after you have done things. Now he rested a little. Upon the top of the great log we had cut away he built a little fire, and supplied it with dry fuel as it ate its way into the wood. When it threatened to reach too far toward the end or sides, he dammed it with wet mud, and so made it eat this way or that way, as he would have it, until of the huge log there remained but a thing hollowed and charred, with thin, strong sides and bottom. We pushed it into the water, and it floated high, carrying half a score of us at once. So came the first man-made boat. Now we could fish throughout the whole lagoon!

With long poles thrust to the bottom, we guided the boats here and there about the shallow waters, and had better fortune than ever before, spearing the fish at all their feeding places. Sometimes, too, we would guide the boats into the depths of the wild rice which grew in the water, and lie in wait there for the water-fowl which came at night. So our fortunes were bettered.

It was a wonderful boat, one we could pole through the water far more swiftly than we could the other, and it seemed as if there could be nothing better. But we did not know. Not a great time passed when a strange thing happened. It was that I saw foolish boys make the clumsy boat we had before move in the water without a pole. We could make a boat move in the water only when we thrust down a pole to the bottom, and leaned against it and pushed; but the idle boys, playing in the one lying by the bank in the still lagoon, began pulling a flat stick through the water beside them, and the boat moved out, and then they were afraid, and yelled loudly, for they could not get back to shore. We got them back, poling

with the only other boat we had. It was all most foolish, but I wondered. I saw the boys pull the flat stick through the water, and saw the boat move. I, myself, saw it. After that, I sought the flat stick the boys had used, and looked upon it and all over it carefully. It was just as any other flat stick.

When all were gone into the caves or the wood I took the stick and got into the boat myself; but I carried the pole with me, and laid it in the boat, lest without it I could not get back to shore. Then I took the flat stick, and thrust it into the water, and pulled backward with it, first on one side of the boat and then the other, as we used our pole, and again the strange thing happened, for the boat moved on the water as it had done with the boys! Farther and farther it went from the land, and I took up the pole with which to push myself back, but it would not reach bottom. The flat stick had carried me too far. I was frightened. I knew not what to do. I yelled, but there was no one to hear me. I was afraid of the water.

Then, in my desperation, I took the flat stick again, and pulled with it in the water, and the boat went farther, and soon, as I looked about, I saw that I was close to the wood on the other side of the lagoon. I pulled with the flat stick again, and the boat touched land again, and I climbed out and lay down upon the ground.

Long I thought. Could the flat stick make the boat go back? I would try. I clambered into the boat, and turned it about with the pole, so that it pointed toward the other shore, and then took the stick and pulled with it in the water again, and was carried back to very nearly the place from which I had started. I sprang upon the

bank, and yelled and leaped up and down. I wonder why it is that men always dance up and down and yell when they are happy? The other creatures do not act in that foolish way.

So I danced and whooped, and then, finally, I became tired. But I was the greatest man in the tribe. I alone had the flat stick, and none should take it from me. There was another flat stick lying on the shore, and I took it up in sport, and got into the boat with it, laughing, because I knew it would not make the boat move. I was wrong. I pulled with it as I had with the other, and, behold! the boat moved as it had done before! Other flat sticks I took then, and pulled with them, and the boat obeyed them all. Any flat stick would move the boat, if it were only to be pulled with the flat side against the water. I was no richer than any other man of the tribe. Then I tried to move the boat with round sticks — many of them — but it lay still. The sticks simply glided through the water, and the boat would not heed them.

I shouted again, still more loudly, because I wanted to tell about the flat stick, and Thin Legs came running from the wood where he had been gathering nuts and roots. No game had he, for Thin Legs does not often hunt, though he alone can chip the best arrow-heads and spear-heads. I told him of the wonderful flat stick, and all it had done, and there came the thinking look in his eyes which I do not understand, and then he tried the flat stick himself in the boat, and then climbed ashore and leaped and shouted almost as wildly as I had done. After a time he sat down upon a little rock, and sat there long, saying no word, holding the flat stick in his hand, and

looking at it. He could think long. It did not hurt his head as it did mine, and the heads of others of the Cave men, if we thought too much. Then we went to the caves together. Thin Legs carried with him the flat stick, but he said nothing.

When I left the cave the next morning the big yellow thing that makes the light had not yet come up above the great forest to the east. I could not wait. I was too eager to try to go upon the water again with a flat stick to move the boat. I ate but a mouthful or two of the flesh of the little deer I had killed in the ravine in the hills, and then I ran to where were the boat and the flat sticks. I took my bow and arrows with me. I would get across the lagoon, and go into the beech wood where many birds fed on the nuts, and where it was good hunting. There was no boat there! Then there came to my ears a yell from the other shore.

I called aloud in answer, and from the shadow of the distant bushes across the water came out the boat with Thin Legs kneeling in it, and digging the water, as it seemed, with a flat stick again, and the boat was coming toward me. But far more swiftly and straight it came than it had done the day before, and I knew in a moment that Thin Legs, the wise, had been at work in the night, at work by his fire in the cave, and that, somehow, he had given more strength to the flat stick.

It was the same flat stick at one end, but not at the other. The day before it had been hard to grasp and hold, because it was so broad, and I could not get my fingers round it. I could hold it only with a hard clutch, pressing on each side, and so could not pull it through the

water without a strain. Now it was another kind of stick. All night long Thin Legs had worked with his stone hatchet and with his knife. For what would be the length from a man's foot to his knee he had chopped and chipped on each side of the wood until there was left something that could be clasped easily in the hand, and this part he had cut and scraped until it was round, like a spear-handle. At the end was still a flat stick with which a man could pull in the water with all his strength, grasping the round handle above. No man had seen such a stick before, and I spoke not, though Thin Legs grinned.

"We will call it a paddle — which means what pulls," he said, and grinned again. "Get into the boat."

I got into the boat, and took the strange stick, and dug it into the water, and pulled swiftly with all my might, and the boat shot away as do some of the swimming birds upon the water; for now I had my grip and I was strong. I went to the other shore, and, very swiftly, back again. What a thing had we!

And another paddle made Thin Legs, so that we each had one, and day by day we learned about the boat and the flat stick, until, when we pulled together, we went over the water like the queer clacking water bird of the rushes, which need not fly from danger, so swiftly can it swim.

And all this time, in the day, was Thin Legs toiling upon a new boat, the little boat for us two alone, which should be greater than the boat the tribe had already made. All day he toiled, chipping with his stone axe, and burning with little fires covered by wet clay, that the fire might not reach too far, and each night I brought

him food — nuts and berries and meat — for I was as eager about the boat as he. And, one day, Thin Legs declared the boat was done.

It was a wonderful boat! Never before had such a boat been seen. Not great in size was it — only the length of two men, and but broad enough for one — and each of its ends was pointed like the other. But it was not that which made the boat so marvellous. Long and patiently had Thin Legs laboured. Much had he chipped and burned, and so watchful had he been that the boat, smooth on the outside as the shell of the river turtle, was itself but the thinnest shell, alike in thickness throughout every part of the tough wood, yet as strong as the clumsy boats we had already made, and so light that one man alone could carry it. Even Thin Legs found it not too great a burden. To me, Scar, the Strong One, it was as nothing. Yet this shell thing could easily carry the two of us upon the water, and a considerable burden besides. Very wise was Thin Legs.

Wondering were the other Cave men when we put our boat in the lagoon and they saw how great indeed it was. Many days we practised, and learned to paddle, alone or together, and to turn the boat this way or that as we willed. We might, we thought, even venture upon the deep river, but we were not sure of that yet. Some day, though, we would make the venture; though far down the river, so the old men said their fathers had told them, were a strange people, who lived upon the shell-fish they dug from the sands of the shores and who were very fierce, and slew all strangers, though they had no bows, but only spears and axes and stone knives. Of all these things Thin Legs and

I talked much, but we had no thought of going upon the deep river at this time.

For a long time we used the boat, going where we would in the lagoon, and spearing the fish, though many we lost, because our spears would not hold them well; and great hunting had I in the beech and oak woods on the farther side, which we could not reach so easily before, and where the bush birds, and the cock that struts and calls, and all the creatures that feed upon the nuts and berries, were not so fearful as those on the side of the lagoon where were the caves, because they had not been hunted so often. Close upon these creatures I would creep, and drive my arrows through them; and we would come back to the caves with much meat. And there was none among the hunters who matched with me, Scar, the strong bowman. Then another great discovery.

I had shot and killed a porcupine, and went back to the caves with him most carelessly; and because there was more than I could eat — he was a very fat porcupine — I called to Thin Legs to come and cook and eat him with me. I was careless, and one of the spines, the things upon the back of the porcupine, slipped into my thumb, and I could not pull it out again from the flesh below the first joint. Thin Legs tried to help me get the piece of porcupine out of my hurt thumb; but it would not come back, though we pulled, and it hurt me, and I yelled. Then suddenly I pushed it — I don't know why I pushed it — and it went easily and smoothly. Thin Legs took hold of the other end of it, and pulled the great quill through without hurting me at all.

The next day we took our little boat, and rowed up and

down all around the edges in the yellow, shallow water, and, with our flint spears, speared many of the fishes; but many of them slid off — not all of them, because sometimes we used to toss them swiftly into our boat or to the bank. But the most of them slid off; and though we were very keen of eye and deft of hand, Thin Legs and I, we never got the half of them.

But something came into my mind that afternoon, and I looked at Thin Legs as we lost fish after fish, and rowed to the shore with him, and sat down on a little rock, and then I asked him what it was that made the quills of the porcupine hold things so.

He did not answer, but thought a little. There came the distant look upon his face again, as if he had found something, and then, with a shout, he leaped up, and began running toward the cave. I paddled back with the boat and fish, but I did not see Thin Legs again that day. He was working in his cave, and would allow none to enter it. In the morning I knew. All night he had worked, and he had chipped the heads of two flint spears so that they were barbed, as were the quills of the porcupine, only in a far coarser way. Then I knew. Never had been such spear-heads before, nor any worth so much in food-getting! How can I tell the story of the Barb?

We went to the lake the next day with our spears — for Thin Legs had made another like the first one — and we rowed in our boat among the shallows, and there came beneath us the great fish; and we speared them, and none of them slipped away, because of the great barbs at the side of our flint spears.

Very heavily laden was our boat, for it was full of fish

when we paddled back that day, and very rich in fishes were we now, and great men in the tribe were Thin Legs and I, because of the spears which held the fishes. There would soon be other spears — very many of them — like these spears that Thin Legs and I had made; but that does not matter. After this, in all the time when the winter had not come, there would be fish enough to eat in the caves. So Thin Legs and I were very proud as we strutted along the narrow pathway below the caves and close to the water where the frogs croak so oddly in the weeds of the sloping bank. The boat and the barb were ours!

There is a curious white fish, very tender and flaky, and sweet in the mouth, which gathers in schools in the big river just above where the swift current begins, and it came to me that I might go among them with tied lines and barbed hooks trailing from the boat, and so catch at least one or two of them. I wanted Thin Legs to go with me, but he declared it to be unsafe. If once the current got hold of the boat too strongly, he said, it would be carried down the river and over the falls and upon the jagged rocks where no man could live; but I only laughed at him, and said, since he feared, I would fish alone. I took my lines with me, with bait for the barbed hooks, and tied one end of the lines about my waist, letting the hooks float in the water far behind. When I heard the roar of the falls, I became afraid, and wished to turn the boat to row back with the floating hooks; but I found all at once that I had come too far. As I strove to turn, the fierce current caught the paddle, and exerted its strength against me. How could Thin Legs have chanced

upon such treacherous wood? The paddle snapped short in the middle, and I was helpless with the fragment of the handle in my hand. The boat whirled round in the rushing waters. The falls roared more loudly. There were the jagged rocks below, and certain death there. I threw myself along the bottom of the tossing boat, lest it overturn even before the leap. But of what avail? There was only death below!

I closed my eyes, and, with a roaring of the waters in my ears, shot downward toward the jagged rocks, and then came nothingness.

CHAPTER VI

THE SOWERS

THE hut, which was made of poles leaning against the perpendicular side of the rocky height, was cool and pleasant to lie in during the heat of the day. It was mid-afternoon, and why I should have been sleeping at such a time of day I could not understand. Through the entrance to the hut I could look across the valley, through which ran a shallow little river, and could see huts like the one I occupied ranged against the extending wall of the precipice, and people moving about. For a moment or two I was lost in mind. Surely I never had seen the valley and the huts before. I dreamed I had been somewhere else — in a boat tossing madly on a wild river. But soon my senses returned. I, Scar, the Strong, was in my own hut, and with my own people, and all was well. Where was Thin Legs? Where was our boat? How came I to be wearing a coat of deerskin, and how came I to be wearing leggings of the same skin? Always had my legs been bare. Then I laughed; for, all at once, my mind came back to me. I had only dreamed. I was in my own hut, in the village of my clan, than which there was none more prosperous. What clan had better homes or better bows and spears and axes in the hands of better hunters and fisherman living near the broad lake which lay between the rocky hills sloping downward to the plain

and woods, through which a river led to the not-far-distant sea? The water of the lake was salt, for the tides came up the river to it; and there were many fish there, and shell-fish, where the wild things fed. There were no people who excelled us, and indeed we knew of no other tribes, save one living far to the south and another which it was said lived still farther to the westward. We were a satisfied people, remaining long in one place, though sometimes, in the summer, we abandoned the village to the women and children and old men, and made hunting trips to where the great ox, the urus, was more abundant than nearer us, to bring home the dried meat to make full the winter's store. Fish from the lake we had, and dried them, and from the forest the women brought the wild plums and a sort of apple, and many berries, which also were dried, and which we ate in winter. Also the women gathered seeds and grains, which they pounded into a coarse meal, between smooth stones, and this they mixed with water into cakes, and made that which was good to eat with the meat and fish, either fresh or dried, as in the winter-time, when the game might have drifted southward, and the ice was thick upon the lakes, so that the hunting and fishing were not easy, and starvation might come had we not the dried things. We were ordinarily provident, though, for Old Bear, the head of the clan, had wisdom, and his axe was heavy. He was a huge old man, heavy of aspect, and strong, and rarely was he disobeyed.

I became more thoroughly awake, and rose from my bed of wolf-skins, and stretched out my arms, and flexed my muscles, and went out into the sunlight, and looked

about me. I was hungry, and there had come to my nostrils the odour of roasting meat, as there should have been that of fish as well. I knew what I should find. There would be Limp, who lived in a nearby hut, who always rose before me, and prepared the food, as was right, for was it not I who brought in all save the fish, for the broken and shortened leg of Limp made him of little use in the hunt? He could fish well, and do many other things better than the rest of us. I have heard that it has been always the way with men, that those who were crippled have been deepest of thought and discovered most of the new things that have been good for us. The old men tell us so. And in almost every clan there are cripples; for there are dangers all about, and it is only natural that some of us should be killed or at least maimed. Why the maimed should often become the wisest, I do not know. Perhaps it is because they have more time to think, and so conceive of new things. It seems to me that must be the reason. Limp, my closest friend, was full of dreams. He should have had a wife, instead of living with me, who cared little for women; but the woman he sought he could not get. I was sorry for Limp, because of his disappointment over the woman beyond his reach, and told him so; and sorry also that I could not aid him, and so he had to endure his sorrow nearly alone, unless it may be that he had the sympathy of old Ox, and Feather, his wife, whose hut was up the ravine a little way apart from the village. It had at one side of it an open swarded space, where the two old people worked together in the sunshine, he fashioning bows and arrows, and she attending to the drying of the fruits and berries

she had gathered, or grinding the seeds and nuts. Very wise was Feather in the gathering of seeds. She knew where grew the millet and the wild barley, and, old as she was, gathered more of those seeds for the winter than did any other woman of the tribe, though of nuts and fruit she did not get so much, because she was too old and weak to climb. So she sought the seeds, though the millet and barley did not grow in abundance anywhere, and to get the seeds she must often wander far and search most patiently. It was pretty to see the old man and the woman working together in the sunshine in the rock-surrounded glade, and Limp was often with them; for times would come when the whole village was abandoned, — the men upon the hunt, and the women and children gathering wood or fruits and nuts, and only these three would be left. I have said that old Feather was wise — shrewd she was, too — and it may be that it was she who, being a woman and old, must know the hearts of women, first gave to Limp the idea from which came the thing he did to help him toward Little Toes, the woman he so desired.

I have said there was no smell of fish when I awoke. Great fisherman as Limp was, we had fared without fish, and I had threatened him with my unstrung bow; but he only laughed and cared not, for he knew that I would not strike him. For days he had been absent, and I knew not where he had been; and I did not question him, for that was our way. The hut people, save in light obedience to the head of the clan, were each a law unto himself. It chanced, though, that on this day of which I tell, after I had eaten and again threatened Limp because

there was no fish, I went down the river toward a forest near the lake, and, as I neared it, saw Limp walking up and down the shore, and stooping often to pick up something he had found. I ran down to where he was seeking, and caught him by the shoulders, and shook him, and then laughingly he told me what he had been doing.

Ever, Limp said, even when he tried to sleep at night, there was the vision of Little Toes before him — Little Toes, with her necklace of red berries. He had been sad day and night because neither the father nor the mother of Little Toes wanted to give her to such as he, who was lame, and could only fish, and furthermore because another man, whom they favoured, wanted her. Big Bow, the great hunter, was wooing her; and she often smiled upon him.

Big Bow had cast eyes on Little Toes, whose father and mother were old and lazy, and thought he could buy her by gifts of meat and skins, as well he might; but the goodwill of Little Toes herself must be considered, for we did not seize upon the women we bought, as was once the custom, and for Little Toes there were other suitors. Limp, it must be admitted, was not very fine to look upon. He could talk better than Big Bow, and women like one who can talk; but he could not bring many skins or much meat, though of fish he brought abundance. But people cannot live on fish alone. It seemed that Limp had little chance, and I, his friend, was sorry for him; but I had not fully considered his shrewdness and his ways.

Ever the young girls sought to bedeck themselves, that they might be fair to look upon, and sometimes they would string red berries upon grass, and hang the loop

about the neck, and it was a pretty thing to see. It could last but for a little time, but, while it lasted, it was glittering; and ever Little Toes wore such a necklace and much she grieved that the beautiful thing would wither so soon into hardness and dullness, and of all this Limp knew well. So it came that he conceived a thing that was wondrous. He told me of what he had done. He was walking beside the lake one day, black of mood, thinking of Big Bow, and of how hard his chances were of getting the woman who seemed so fair to him. It was as he walked thus — as he told me — that his eyes rested, at first unseeing, on the shore's margin, where the creek tumbled into the lake, and where there was a blaze of colouring as the sun shone on the tossed-up shells of white and of a glittering pink of which the lake had many. Somehow they made him think more than ever, if that were possible, of the red berries around the throat of Little Toes. Much he thought, he told me, until, suddenly, he knew what it was that made him see Little Toes with her necklace. The white shells were like her white skin, and the pink shells were like the berries. Then came to him a great idea. He ran up and down the shore, gathering the pink shells and the white ones, and filled his wolfskin pouch with them, and then ran to his cave, and stayed within it long. So it was that for many days I had seen so little of him, and had wondered what he might be doing thus alone.

In a hidden place among the rocks near the lake he was at work with bits of sandstone and his drill of the hardest flint, working more eagerly than ever he had worked on spear or arrow-head, and wonderful things began to show in his strong hands as he so laboured. He

was most patient, as surely he had need to be. He bored each white shell and each one of the bright pink until there were many of them thus pierced, and then he rounded and polished them until they glittered wondrously when he brought them to the light. He marvelled at them himself. They were wonderful beads. He took a long tendon from the leg of a great elk which we had killed, such tendon as we used for a bowstring, and which would last a lifetime, and upon this he strung the beads, first a pink one and then a white one, and so on to the end. He knotted the ends of the tendon together, in a knot that could not be untied, and then held up before his eyes something which no one had ever seen before — the most glorious shining thing that men had ever known. It was the first necklace that would not shrink and wither. All this Limp told me, and showed me what he had made. It was marvellous. And, after this, the days passed, and he still laboured on the bauble. But no longer did I reproach him about the fish. My heart was with him, my lame companion.

And all this time, while Limp had been working in the hiding place in the rocks, Big Bow had been seeking to gain Little Toes and take her to his living place. To him, as to Limp, came a new idea. He would make a gift to the girl. One night, just after the darkness came, Big Bow went to the cave of Little Toes when he knew that the girl would be alone, for that was the time that Old Log and Groundnut, his wife, went forth to gossip in the neighbouring caves. Tossed over one of his shoulders was the body of a little deer, very fat, that he had killed that day; and over the other hung down to his

very feet a great glossy mass, which was the most wonderful skin in the world, for it was the skin of the great cave bear, the only one in the tribe, and had come to Big Bow because he was foremost in the famous chase and fight when the bear was killed. The bear put an end to old Chuck that day.

Few words had Big Bow. He laid the deer at the feet of Little Toes, and then spread out the skin on the ground before her.

"It is yours," he said. "To-morrow I am coming to take you to my cave."

Little Toes did not answer at first. She only threw herself down upon the furry skin, and cuddled herself there.

"It is good," she said.

Then Big Bow went away.

Soon there was a little sound in the almost darkness, and Limp stood beside the girl, as Big Bow had done. The fire in the cave blazed up, and he called her to it. Then from his wolfskin pouch he drew forth something which flashed and glittered almost like the flying blazing bugs of the night among the bushes or the shining things in the sky above. It seemed almost alive. He hung it about her neck. The girl looked down upon it in speechless amazement. She lifted the beads in her shaking fingers, but her lips were still. She seemed almost to be in one of the dreams which come to one sleeping.

"Come with me to my cave, and be my wife," said Limp.

She did not answer, even then. She only put her hand in his, and they went out into the night.

They took the bearskin with them.

There is nothing more to tell of the marrying of Limp and Little Toes. He was with me less. I was sometimes most lonesome without him.

Raging like a bull aurochs was Big Bow when he learned that Little Toes was lost to him, and that the wonderful skin was lost as well, and deep were his threats of vengeance upon Limp; but I — I, Scar, the Strong — told him that I would slay him if evil came to Limp through him; and he did not dare to hurt him. Not always do the lake people fight for their friends — we were but rude; but I had for Limp a liking which was my own, and I am sometimes hard of mood. And soon there were other necklaces of shell and pebbles, and amulets and anklets of coloured shells worn by the young women. Very strenuous are lovers.

Never before, as I have said, had the wild people lived so peacefully nor learned so many things to make the living easier. Fine was the climate, for even in winter the snows were not too deep nor the cold too biting, and there were game and fish, and the fruits and nuts and soft roots of the forest were there in plenty. We were soon to have them all the more because of the things, as I have said, that we learned.

Many times had the sun risen since Limp and Little Toes began living in the hut that Limp builded. And one thing, greatest of all, we found, because now we feared the winters less.

I have told of old Ox, and of old Feather, his wife, who were friends of Limp, and who lived alone in a hut above the village, and of how the woman winnowed and pounded her seeds in an open wide earthy space near the hut, sur-

rounded on all sides by rocks, and never entered save by her and Ox, or by the birds of the air. Much she laboured there, being so patient in her gathering of seeds; and it often chanced that when gusts of wind came in her winnowing by tossing up the grain in her hands, some of the seeds would be carried away, and scattered over the little field, and after that the birds would come to eat them. Many a bird did old Ox get there with his arrows; for though his eyes were growing dim, because of age, he still shot very well, for he had been a master bowman in his day. But it is not of the birds he killed that I am going to tell, but of another matter concerning the scattered seeds, and what came at first through no man's thought or doing, but all by accident, and later because of the wisdom of old Feather.

All through the autumn Feather had winnowed the great store of seeds she had gathered, and there was an abundance in the skin bags in the hut for the winter — both to make into the water cakes, and to trade for meat or fish. But likewise there remained many seeds missed by the birds, scattered over the little bare field, which, though amid the rocks, had a soil which was quite deep, the washings from the heights above. Then came winter and the snow, and the field was hidden.

And then followed the spring, and the rains and the warm sun, and Feather saw what was curious to her, yet what, as she thought upon it, pleased her mightily. Thoughtful and far-sighted was old Feather. What she saw was a green carpet on a little portion of the field near the hut, and, looking at it closely, she saw that it was made up of shoots and spears of the millet and the barley,

for in her years she had learned discernment, and knew them well, even as they grew in greenness. Then came to her a great idea. She and old Ox would not trample upon the green space, but would let the plants grow and ripen their seeds there. "So I shall have more seeds for the winter," thought she, "and shall not have to go afar for a part of them, at least." And so they guarded the patch of barley and millet, and it grew lustily, and the seeds ripened, and from the fruitful patch old Feather garnered in the autumn quite a store of seeds, to add to that which she gleaned in long journeyings across the plain, and between the rocks where a little soil might be, or in the forest openings. Long and deeply did Feather ponder over this thing when the winter came again, and she and Ox, well fed, huddled and talked or slept in their skins beside the fire in the clod-covered hut. Seeds she had in abundance, and from her store she filled two bags — one of barley, and one of millet — picking these seeds carefully one by one from the others with which they were mixed. To old Ox she told of the strange thing she was going to do, and he promised to aid her, for well had he learned, through the long years, of the shrewdness and wisdom of the faithful woman he had taken in his lusty youth.

To Limp and me, as well as to old Ox, her husband, Feather told her plan, because she knew that we cared for her, and would not deride her; and, as for me, I became almost as earnest and curious as she herself over the outcome of what she was to do. Why should not something come of that? Plants grew from the seed — we all knew that — and why should we not put the seeds

where we wanted the plants to grow? But only old Feather had thought of that.

And the spring came again, and the warm rains, and carefully old Feather scattered her seeds all over the little field, with its scant covering of short grasses here and there. The barley she scattered on half of the field, and the millet on the other. I was there when she did it, and even scattered some of the seed myself, for the field was not so very little, after all. Nearly a score of yards across, it must have been. And, after the seed was sown, we sat down beside the hut to talk. Then to the feast spread for them suddenly the keen-eyed birds, the pigeons, and even some of the pheasants and many smaller things. Old Feather ran yelling, and waved a skin at them, and they flew away, only to return when she came from the field, for the seeds showed everywhere but too plainly, and were too inviting. Then happened something because of what was observed of Feather, but did for good far more than she intended. The seeds must be hidden! She found a little fallen tree, a great branch to which still clung the dried leaves, and, I aiding her, we dragged it all over the field, by its trunk, the ragged points and ends of the limbs tearing up the earth, not deeply, but enough, and so hiding all the seeds beneath the ground. Then the birds came no more, though old Ox was watchful and ever ready with his bow.

And as soon as the sun smote down and warmed the earth, though the snows still came at times, there came sprouts from the soil all over the little field, and then it became all a vivid green, and later there was sent up a broad waving mass of the green plants, which yellowed as

the autumn came, and the seeds formed, and Feather, the wonderful old woman, had, all together, and close beside her hut, such store of seed as would have taken many weary leagues of search to gather and long carrying in all weather. The birds came again as the grain ripened; but the field was guarded by old Ox and me, and great sport we had in the shooting. A wonderfully good bait for the birds which were best to eat was the grain field of old Feather. And all the grain there was she gathered and put into the skin bags. It was good to see old Ox then. Somehow very close together were these two old creatures, and he was proud.

“There is none like Feather,” he said to me. “Her neck wrinkles are fairer than the beads of the girls.”

And all the tribe wondered and admired, and much desired such store of seed as was in the hut of old Ox and Feather. And others would do as she had done; and that year they garnered many seeds, and stored them, and when the spring came again they cleared a field on the plain close to the hillside and near the village, and made a high fence of brush about it to keep out the wild beasts at night, and there planted the seed. The grain grew and ripened, and the children guarded the field to keep away the flocks of hungry birds; and with the autumn came such store of seeds as the tribe never had owned before. The winter might be cold, and the snow lie deep, and the hunting be bad, but there would in time be no starving in the huts, for with each year the field was made larger, and the crop the greater. But old Feather joined not with the others. She but worked in her own little field, and pondered much and planted carefully.

And old Ox became very feeble and died, and we carried him into the hills, and heaped many stones upon him, that the prowling beasts might not reach him, and promised Feather that some day we would lay her beside him, for so she asked us. Feather then lived alone beside her little field; but an abundance she had brought to her of fish and game, because of what she had done for all of us, and because she had such an abundance of good grain to furnish for the seeding.

There was a great marsh perhaps two leagues away from where we lived, beside the river which ran beside the cliffs, and this opened on a great creek which ran into our river after it had reached the plain. In the midst of the marsh was an island with not many trees but much shrubbery upon it, and all sorts of plants and grasses. Once old Feather had gone to the island in the later autumn, when the marsh was frozen over, for it was dangerous and avoided by all at other times, and there had found, not only much millet and barley, but another seed which grew a little like the barley, but with shorter husks and prickles to it, and another kind of seed. She had gathered but little of this seed; but it had proved most toothsome and best of all seeds to eat. The wheat, she called it. Much she longed for this seed, that she might plant it in her field, and raise plants of this kind, but she was too old and tired for such a journey now, and so I, who cared for the old couple who had done so much for the clan, made promise that some day I would get it for her. And this word I did not forget.

There came a day, when it was early autumn still, that I had great good fortune in the hunt soon after the sun

had risen. There was a fog upon the plain where the deer and the urus and other wild things of the grass-eaters fed, and no wind to carry my scent; and before daylight I crept far out on the wild meadow, for well I knew the way, even in darkness, and hid myself in a little clump of bushes near the forest. I carried my strongest bow and the sharpest and best of my flint arrows. So I lay hidden and silent, and soon I could hear, very close beside me, the sound of moving, feeding things. And slowly, very slowly, the fog thinned, and more light came.

Not ten yards from me — so close that it seemed impossible he could not have felt me near, nor caught my scent, broad side toward me — fed a great stag leading his does. Already, before the fog lessened, I had prepared myself — one knee on the ground, and arrow notched for whatever hap might come with the light. Never was afforded fairer mark so close. I held my aim upon where the heart of the stag should be, and drew with all my strength until the great bow groaned, and the head of the arrow was beside my hand, and then I released it — I, the strongest of bowmen. With the loud twang there came a great snorting, and the does were gone. Not so the huge stag. He leaped far aloft, and gave a mighty bleat, and rolled to earth, thrashing about in his death agony. I had driven the arrow through his heart, and so mightily that the arrow-head stuck out on the farther side!

I ran to the village, and called aloud to the men, and we brought the stag slung beneath a great pole borne on the shoulders of half a dozen of us at either end. A great feast of venison had the whole clan that morning. Much I ate, and then I slept a little; but the sun was not

yet at its highest when I awoke refreshed and strong, and full of vauntingness. I said to myself, "I will do yet another thing this day. I will go to the great marsh, and get for old Feather the strange new seed she wants." So I said to old Feather, and I spoke vauntingly:

"Already to-day have I killed a great stag, and we have much meat. More yet will I do before the darkness comes. I will go to the island in the marsh and gather for you as nearly a bagful as I can of the new kind of seeds that you need, and will bring the bag to you, that you may keep the seeds for the spring planting."

And I threw out my breast.

But Feather cried out that I should not go. Very treacherous was the marsh, she said, and its sand and its black slime had sucked down to death many beasts which ventured into it. I must wait until the winter came, and the marsh was frozen, so that a man might walk upon it safely. True, there might not be any of the seeds left, for the birds would have taken most of them, but with the few she had she could raise a little crop, and the next year there would be an abundance for the planting. But I only laughed at her. I, Scar, was vain, and thought it an easy thing for me to do.

Still, after I had left Feather, there was almost a little fear in me. I knew that many beasts had perished in the marsh, and that in past times more than one person who had hunted along its edges, and maybe ventured a little way into it after some wounded game, had never been seen in the village again; but I was proud, and would not give up the venture. I sought, however, one of the very old men, Three Tooth, who had been a great hunter

and very daring in his youth, and who, I thought, might give me good advice as to the way I should take to get to the island safely. He was very old, and mumbled as he talked, but from him I learned that once he had reached the island in midsummer, though after a most perilous journey, leaping from tussock to tussock, where from the land to the east of the island they rose more closely than elsewhere; but he raised his thin arms, and shook his wrinkled hands, and warned me in his cracked voice against trying to make the journey. Barely had he come back from the island with his life. Once he slipped as he leaped, and the black ooze and sucking sand caught him; and had there not been on the tussock from which he slipped a deep-rooted overhanging willow, to a limb of which he clung, and by aid of which he at last pulled himself out, he would surely have been lost. He begged me not to go, but I told him that I had resolved, and so he told me again the way he had taken, but as I left him he was shaking his head and mumbling wildly.

One of Feather's skin bags I took, and fastened it to my skin belt, that I might not be bothered with the carrying of it, and, besides it, only my flint spear, the long, strong staff of which I thought might aid me in my leaping or in balancing upon the tussocks. Across the plain I went until I reached the eastern side of the great marsh, in the midst of which rose the island — not very high, but showing green with its shrubs against the dreary gray stretch of little ponds and black mud and brown rushes which lay between it and where I stood. It was true, as the old man had told me, that there stretched irregularly across this space a line of little uprising mounds and tus-

socks, upon some of which were stunted willows growing, but they were not as close together as I could have liked, and all seemed desolate and threatening. However, the sun shown brightly, and some of the scummy pools were glittering in a way, and I felt a little braver than I would have had the day been gloomy, and so set my teeth together and started to make the passage.

There was shallow water between me and the nearest uprearing hummock; but I felt the bottom with my spear, and found it to be safe enough, and waded out easily to the hummock, which was gray and grassy, and firm beneath my feet. The next was farther away; but again I felt the bottom with my spear, and again I waded, and once more landed easily. And so from hummock to hummock I waded, sometimes leaping when the dry places were near together, always feeling my way carefully with my spear, but going forward rapidly. I laughed then at the foolish fears of the people of the village.

"It is but an old tale," I shouted aloud in my glee. "It is but a fearsome story invented by the old men and women. A child might wade to the island."

I was within a hundred yards of it. I leaped to the next hummock and across it, and again thrust down my spear. The water was shallow now all the way to the shore. But, though I thrust it in to the butt, I could reach no solid bottom through the black ooze. It clung to the spear, and strength was required even in pulling out the slender shaft.

Now I thought deeply, and something like a fear came to me again. Between me and the island's shore there rose in almost a straight line a series of sedgy tussocks

within leaping distance of each other, but some of them were small, and I feared unstable in their rooted anchorage. However, I must try to cross upon them. They might all be solid. And I must take them with a rush, leaping from one to another before there could be time for any settling. I braced myself at the hummock's edge, holding my spear crosswise in front of me, to assist me as a balance, and leaped forward in a mad race for the firm land. From tussock to tussock I sprang, each affording stoutness enough for the next leap, though some I could feel sway beneath my feet beneath the thrusting force, and so desperately I gained my way until I leaped triumphantly for the last, a little sedge-tufted uprising not six feet from the shore. It turned beneath my feet!

I did not fall, but my feet and legs shot straight downward into the black ooze, and I stood erect there in water less than a hand's-breadth deep, but engulfed nearly to my hips. For a moment I did not seem in such a dreadful strait. There was the firm land so near me that I could reach it with my spear; and surely I, strongest man in a tribe where were many strong ones, could, some way, pull myself from the clutching, and flounder out to safety. I laid the spear crosswise upon the bottom in front of me, that I might press upon it as a sort of leverage, and bore down hardly, and strove to lift my right leg to the surface. I could not. The spear but sank into the ooze, affording no resistance, and the leg seemed held in an awful grip such as I never before had felt. I tried to lift the other, but it would not come from the clasp of the monster beneath. My struggling but sank me more deeply. That would not do. I stood motionless, think-

ing that perhaps I would sink no deeper. If I could but remain thus, even though I should suffer, they would — since all the village knew of my quest — come at least to the border of the marsh, in the morning, to seek for me, and would hear my shouting. It might be then that they would devise some means of reaching and rescuing me. I made note of a thong in my skin leggings below the waist, and so waited, shouting all the time, with a little hope that some hunter might be passing along by the distant shore. But there came no answer. Rarely did the hunters seek the water birds of the marsh. I looked at the thong again. I could not see it! Though I was making no move, the quicksand of the ooze was drawing me steadily downward. I lost my wits. I sought to rush to the solid land by some huge effort of main strength and force, but there was nothing beneath my feet to aid me, and I sank deeper and deeper. When my struggling ceased, I was engulfed to my shoulders. Even to free my arms I must uplift them, and I knew that the end of me was very near. I held them aloft for a little time, and then, wearied, let them drop into the water and upon the ooze of the bottom, where they rested, sinking slowly.

But at the end, brave men are always brave. I shouted. at the ooze and quicksands. They should not take my life! They could not, for my life would be gone before they had all my body. There was the water, only half a foot of it, but enough, and of all deaths, drowning I knew was the easiest. I had seen men nearly drowned whom we had saved just in time, and they had told me that such a death must be pleasant. The very head alone was above the water now. I whooped defiance.

CHAPTER VII

THE TAMERS

I WAS aroused from a bad dream by the sharp, yipping cry of dogs. I was glad to be awake, for in my dream there was suffocation. For a little time after I awoke I was dazed in mind, and could not recognize myself or my surroundings. I was lying in a little sunlit hollow upon a grass-green spot on the surface of a slight rocky height in the plain, and my bow and skin quiver of arrows and my flint-headed spear, smooth as the teeth of the river horse and keen of edge as the blades of the marsh grass, were beside me. Gradually I remembered that I had come alone to the plain to hunt the hares which were abundant in and about the scattered rocks, and the bustards which fed upon the seeds of the many bushes. I had climbed the little height to look about the better, but could see no game, and so had thrown myself down on the soft turf, to await whatever might appear, and then had fallen asleep.

Two young wolf cubs had been captured by boys of the tribe, and brought into camp, and allowed to live; and, when they became grown, were not savage, like other wolves, but remained about, and were fed, and would sometimes prove obedient to what was told them. Once or twice they had even aided in the hunt, by pulling down some wounded animal, and so had earned their feed. It

seemed now that they had followed me to the hunt, though I did not want them and had driven them back, and now I rose to my feet to see what it was that had been the occasion of their clamour. They were leaping frantically about a huge aurochs bull which had wandered from the wide forest glades where the aurochs were in greatest numbers, and now was feeding quietly upon the occasional sweet grass tufts about the thickets. To the two wolf dogs he paid little attention, save once in a while to shake his thick short horns, and make a little rush at them. A great pack of wolves would be required to pull down the mighty aurochs.

I could but look idly upon the useless onslaught. Were I very close to the bull I might drive a shaft to his heart, and so get a great prize. We had done this sometimes, hiding in little trees; but I knew, were I to show myself, that the beast would take to flight, and there was no cover by means of which I might creep upon him. I shouted and waved my arms, and aurochs and wolf dogs went careering away together toward the distant forest. Soon the hares came forth from their hiding places, and I shot three of them as they came feeding close to the little height upon which I crouched. Very good eating were the hares, and they were of much value to us at times, being abundant when greater game was scarce.

As I took my way back to the huts in the gorge, the two dogs, tired of the useless and hopeless chase, came back, and followed close behind me. It was curious. Never before had any wild beast become a friend of man, all either fleeing before him or seeking to devour him. Much I wondered if any other than these would be tamed, and

become, it might be, of use to us. Often had I talked of this to Old Bear, who lived in a cave near my hut in the ravine, and who was the father of Dark Eyes, she who should have one of the hares I had killed. Often had I brought game to Old Bear and his wife and Dark Eyes. She was good to look upon. Her slender arms were round, and her lips were like the red berries. Likewise she was changeful of mood, and showed her teeth sometimes, as, when other beasts come near, does the she panther lying with her cubs at the mouth of her den in the rocks. And beyond the cave of Bear was that of the family of Black Bow, with whom I sometimes hunted and with whom was little Humpback, the slave girl we captured in a battle with a tribe far to the north, whose lands we had invaded in the hunting. We lost good men in that fight, and got many hurts; but at last we drove the others back for a time, and so escaped, bringing with us the girl Humpback, whom we caught in a tree she had climbed. She was older than the children of Black Bow and Loon, his wife, and cared for them, and hunted for nuts and roots, and cooked the fish and meat, though she was but small and bent, because of the hump upon her back. Likewise she was deft with the bone needles and threads of sinews, and made the skin coats and leggins worn by those with whom she lived. Once she made a coat for me from the skins of wolves I had killed, and it was a good coat. Often I brought meat to the cave of Black Bow; for I, who lived alone, often killed more than I could eat, or sell to the old bow and arrow-maker or to the fisherman. Many were the skins in my hut of poles and thatched leaves which leaned against the rock, and soft was the bed upon which

I slept. Long, sometimes, did Dark Eyes look upon me, and I did not like the other look when she saw Humpback eating of the meat I had brought to the cave of Black Bow. Why should her eyes at such times have had such a look? The eyes of Humpback never glittered in such a way, and always she smiled when others ate and patted their stomachs when they were full and sleepy. Wise and swift was Humpback, and her look was always that of the urus cow as she broods above her young calf in the bushes.

I came to the cave of Black Bow, but there was no one within, and none to be seen up or down the rocky glen in which we lived, and which led downward to the river. Between the hills was a little valley down which the creek runs, and in the rocky hill on either side were many caves, while built against the walls were huts of poles like my own. Better were the caves in winter, when the cold was bitter, but in the summer the huts were best to live in. Even in winter they were made warm with many skins hung tent-like about the fire, and none perished from the cold. It was a good place for a camping, though sometimes we might go from there, for we stayed not always in one place, as do some tribes of which I have heard, who plant seeds in the ground, and so fear less the famine; but when the game was hunted out we drifted ever to the southward, to find anew some rocky place beside the water where we might defend ourselves against all things, and have water and the fishing at hand. But here was still game. There were yet the urus and the aurochs and even the little wild horses and wild pigs and many deer and the grouse and ducks and many other birds. I —

Scar, the hunter — found meat and skin and fur for my using, and sometimes sharp encounter, for, where the game is, there are the beasts which feed upon them, the great brown bear, and the smaller bear, and the wolf pack, and the leopard and panther and hyena-like thing, and the lurking, silent wolverine, were many in number and ranging far and wide. Once there were huge tigers, and monsters in the river, so the old men told from tales of their grandfathers, and from their further grandfathers away back dimly, but all those more dreadful things were gone. Yet it was by no means wise to hunt carelessly. Not a few of the tribe had gone into the woods or far out upon the plain and never came back, and once I found a gnawed, grinning head of bone which must have been the head of a man. Always upon my hunting, beside my bow, I carried my sharp spear in hand, and my stone axe in my belt, and I liked best to hunt where there were trees which I could climb. Good things are trees.

I turned to walk toward my hut, carrying the hares in my hand, when I heard a shout from the river, and there came to me Black Bow and his wife, he with his weapons, and she carrying a great fish he had speared in the shallows. We had done well. He chopped off a part of the fish, which he gave to me, and took two of the hares, and then I went to my hut, and made a fire, and cooked my meat and fish, and ate, and was most content. And, later, I went out and sat upon a rock with Black Bow, who also had eaten and was content, and we talked there long, the wolf dogs playing about us.

The wolf dogs made me think; and I said, as I had said before to Black Bow, that the dogs were useful, and that

we should seek to capture more cubs in the caves, and I asked him if he did not think there were other wild things we could tame and use. But Black Bow only laughed loudly. "What think you," he said, "of Gnawbones and the leopard?" And he laughed again.

That indeed made me at a loss to answer, for the adventure of the leopard had been a brisk one. Because of the youth Gnawbones there had been a lively half hour in the glen. He was a strange youth, living with his father and mother, old Three Toes and dark old Night, as they called her, in the cave apart from the rest of the tribe in the gorge which leads from the river caves to the forest and plain above. Unlike most of the Cave people were old Three Toes and Night, and some said that they were the children of River people, captured long ago. I do not know. I know only that they lived much on frogs and fish and clams.

But Gnawbones, the youth, was different from his father and mother. He hungered for meat, and was a lonely creature of the woods and hills. He sported little with the Cave youth below, but was ever in the beech woods of the uplands, and the wonder was that the hunting beasts there had not devoured him. But he was keen of sight and quick of ear, and could run swiftly, and climb like the monkey people who live far, very far to the south of us. And he brought alarm to the Cave people, and how it first began he told me after I had beaten him with the handle of my spear.

One day, moons before, when the sun had just begun going down the sky to let the darkness come, he was sleeping soundly in a nest he had made in a crotch of one

of the great beech trees, when something, so softly purring that it awakened him but slowly, was pressed against his face. He opened his eyes, and there, snuggling close, was what, to the boy, was the most beautiful thing he had ever seen. It was tawny, with dark spots, and had shining eyes and soft paws with which it patted the youth's face, and then sank down to stillness beside him. Much as he knew of the forest, the boy did not recognize the creature; but it was a very young one of the tree leopard, as it is called, though it cannot climb the small trees, and it was a thing which I avoided when hunting.

The foolish youth could not bear to leave the thing where he found it, and slid down the tree with it at once, none too soon, it may be, for its mother must have left it somewhere in the treetop earlier in the day, and had she come back in time there would have been an end of Gnawbones, and the she leopard would have fed well. But he got away and took to his father and mother the little thing which was so pretty and purring, and, seemingly, so gentle. They told him he might keep it — well for them was it that I, who know wild beasts, heard nothing of the matter! — and so it was kept in the cave, and fed, sometimes on flesh which Gnawbones brought, but mostly upon fish and clams and frogs, which, as I have said, were the chief food of Three Toes and his wife.

And so, as Gnawbones told me, when I made him confess with my spear-handle, the thing was kept in the cave, and grew until it became a plaything no longer, but something ever hungry, and sometimes sullen. Then they, the foolish ones, drove a great stake in the cracked rock, in a corner of the cave floor, and tied the beast there, with a

thong about its neck fastened to a bar of hard wood, which, in its turn, was tied to the great stake. The brute, nearly full grown, could only circle about the stake, though ever straining at his thongs. So they kept him and fed him. No man can tell why they did so.

There came a day when the fishing was bad, and frogs and clams were few for Three Toes, and the hunting bad for the youth Gnawbones, and that day the leopard got no food. The next morning he was raging, and Three Toes and Gnawbones left the cave early to find what might come to them. At the warm time, the middle of the day, when the sun hung almost over the caves by the river, there came such a screaming and yelling from the gorge as had never been heard before. It came to our ears together, to Black Bow and me, for we were not in our huts, but sitting outside, working upon our bows. I seized my spear, and ran toward the gorge.

Night, the old woman in the cave in the gorge, told me afterward what happened to her. The hungry leopard had strained at its leash until the thong about its neck had parted, and in an instant it had crouched for a spring at her throat. She had seen it in time, and had caught up a spear, and had screamed shrilly; and, whatever the cause, the leopard had turned its head, and then leaped from the cave out into the open.

She saw it go down the gorge, and had rushed out and climbed a tree, still screaming, to warn Three Toes and Gnawbones, who, she knew, were in a little wood near at hand. They came running, and then also climbed trees most hurriedly, and added to the noise with their wild howling to warn the Cave people below. That was when

I, leading the others, came running to the mouth of the gorge. There, halfway up it, we saw the leopard, advancing downward, cautious and crouching!

I did not fear the beast. I held my spear forward, and neared the leopard, until we were close together. With a snarl, it leaped for me, and I held my spear as I had done before with a leopard I slew; but the ground was sloping and I slipped upon some pebble, and the spear just entered the shoulder of the brute, tearing outward through the spotted skin. The leopard screamed, almost as had the old woman; then, as it struck the ground, whirled swiftly and dashed up the gorge again. There it paused and sent up a long, mournful cry, such as I had heard in the woods before. From the far beech wood came an answer — the call of another of its kind! It did not stay longer. In long leaps it went across the open space toward the wood, a spotted shadow against the brown grass, and into the forest where its kindred were.

And this adventure of Gnawbones and his people was what had made Black Bow laugh when I talked of taming and training other things than the wolf dogs. We said no more at this time, but there came a day when he would have such fancies as had I. We were led to thinking of taming again by a curious happening, and truly our first effort was no mean one, however rude its ending. And it was because of a discovery of the little children. There came the Rope and Noose.

It was when the leaves were beginning to turn yellow, that the children stumbled upon the thing. Little Round Nose and Crop Ear, the children of Black Bow, were playing together near where the strong marsh grass grew

thickest beside the river, a little way above the glen of the caves and the huts. They were amusing themselves, without anything in mind, as children do, and were merry, running about here and there, as do the young of the wild things, chattering and digging, and throwing stones into the shallow water, and watching the little fishes as they darted away affrighted. They tired at last, and seated themselves in the long grass where it was dry, and began pulling it up by the roots, and playing with it idly. Little Crop Ear laid some of the long blades together; and not knowing what she did, only fumbling with her fingers at a root bearing three blades, began laying them one over the other. She did this for quite a space of time, and then shrieked out in delight upon seeing that the strands remained together in a flat green braid. She kept up the wonderful task until the whole length of the grass was braided, and then did not know what to do. She pulled more grass, and tried to braid it in with what she already had, but could not do it for a time. But she was a stubborn and persistent child, and, it may be, had some natural gift at such a thing, just as some of the boys have in the stone-chipping, and at last she discovered a way of interlacing and plaiting in the new grass, and making the green blade longer.

Then all went well with her; and, when she returned to the cave, she carried proudly with her the long, slender, three-stranded cord. After they had eaten, Black Bow took the string from the child, and began playing with it, and testing its strength. He wondered at it. He had not thought that the marsh grass so plaited could be so strong. He called to me, and I went to his cave, and

we considered the thing together. Why could we not use this queer device to bind things together, as we used the twisted sinews of the wild creatures we had killed? We learned from the child how to plait the tough grass, as did the women of the clan; and henceforth, because of these cords, a new convenience existed in the huts and caves.

The only fault with the marsh-grass cord was that, tough as it was, it was not quite strong enough for many uses to which it might be put. "If it were only bigger," said Black Bow to me as we talked of the matter; and then, all at once, there came to him a great thought. If three of the strands of the marsh grass could be braided so, why could not three of the cords already made be plaited in the same way, and so on to any size? We worked together, and when the sun went down that night we held in our hands a great braid — one he and I could not break, though, each taking one end, we strained against it with all our force. We owned a rope of might. And other ropes we made — some from the inner bark we peeled from the linden tree; but, in the end, the marsh grass proved the best.

It was queer, but always, it seems to me, when one good thing is found, there comes another. It may be it is because the first one makes us think.

There was much use for our ropes. We could tie our boats to the bank with them, needing no longer always to drag the craft ashore; huts could be bound about with them to resist the wind storms better; and there were many other uses for them. Then came the last and greatest thing, for which I gave Black Bow much credit.

In Black Bow's cave were always ropes, for Humpback

had learned to make them strong, ever getting the longest and best of the grass, and plaiting carefully and deftly, and they sufficed to buy much fish, flesh and skins, and so lessened the labours of Black Bow and Loon. A rare creature was Humpback.

It was one night, after looking at a new rope Humpback had finished, that Black Bow, handling it idly, stuck one end of the rope through a loop he had made at the other and sat holding the end in his hand, while the opening in the rope coil lay on the floor. He chanced to rise just as little Crop Ear, running across the cave floor, stepped into it. The rope came up suddenly, and closed about Crop Ear beneath her arms. She was a prisoner! She had stepped into the first noose, and it had risen and tightened about her! There were yells and laughter in the cave, and others were caught as they walked across the floor, or were lassoed with the loop thrown over their heads, and there was much sport there. And the next day, as we sat upon our little rock together, as was our custom after the hunting or the fishing, Black Bow told me of the noose, and later we talked again of the taming, and then the thought of the two things came together!

If the noose at the end of a rope could entrap and hold a child or a man, why could it not as well tighten upon and hold, alive and unharmed, any of the wild creatures, and why could we not thus capture them, and tame them? We reasoned long, and finally came upon a great resolve. We would lay the noose, and hide ourselves, and capture a wild doe, and, it might be, tame her, as the wild dogs had been tamed; for we did not reason at that time that it is only the young of the wild things that can be tamed.

There was a path through the brushwood leading from the forest to the plain, along which many of the deer, and often other creatures, were accustomed to pass to their feeding grounds, and there, we said, we would first place the gripping noose thing, and lie in wait together. So, for days, Humpback worked upon the plaiting of a rope at least seven times the length of a man, and very strong, with a loop for the noose made at one end, and with it Black Bow and I went forth together, to what happening we could not guess. It was late in the afternoon, and already the dusk was coming when we laid the noose in the pathway, and crouched hidden behind the little bushes near, with the other end of the rope wound about both our bodies, that we might pull together, and so be more certain of our capture. We did not have long to wait. There came a thudding, there was a rough brushing aside of the bushes along the pathway, and a great hoof was planted in the noose. Black Bow and I threw ourselves backward with all our force, and drew the strong rope taut.

Of what happened then, neither Black Bow nor I could afterward remember with great clearness. There was a thundering bellow, a rush down the pathway toward the open, and we who were seeking the capture of a gentle doe were torn from our hiding place in the thicket, and carried sliding, bounding, and hurtling away toward where were the rolling pastures of the eaters of grass. Our noose was gripping the hind legs of a great bull aurochs, mightiest creature of the plain, perhaps the one the wolf dogs had annoyed.

Even such huge beast, fearing little, was panic-stricken with that fearful thing grasping it.

Clumsily, because so hampered, and still bellowing, floundering rudely across the billowy prairie, the great brute plunged along; and now dragged through the swift face-cutting grass, now bounced from hummock to hummock, we were hurled along furiously at the end of the rope. I cannot forget it, though it is not good to remember. The rope was about us both; and as we tore through weeds and brush, we bumped and bounded, and, coming to earth again, sometimes Black Bow would be atop, and sometimes I, though which of us was being bruised most fearfully could not be told. Once we tore through the top of a fallen thorn tree, and there was blood upon our faces then. The rope, it seemed to me, was cutting us in twain, but I could not think at the time save in a dim way, that Black Bow and I were going to our death. Then came what was a little less terrible. The aurochs was rushing along now where the plain was more even of surface, and we were dragged smoothly through the grass, and at a lesser pace, for the strain was telling upon even so powerful an animal. Something must come soon, though, or there would be two dead men at the end of the rope. It came, and saved our lives.

There was in the way of the aurochs a little gully, and this he sought to leap in his blundering and hindered flight. His hind leg, drawn backward by the weight at the end of the rope, crippled him in the effort, and he swerved, stumbled, and rolled down upon his back into the depression. He was helpless for the moment in this struggle; and that moment we made the most of, bruised and bleeding as we were, though not insensible. There was a little slack in the rope now: and, since one of our

knives still remained in its pouch, we slashed the rope between us and the aurochs, and then the coil about us. It was hard getting to our feet; but soon a little strength came, and we ran weakly together toward the village, for we did not know but the enraged aurochs, which was floundering from the gully now, might do us harm. It was a weary journey; and when we reached our homes and laid down on our skin couches, there was dried blood upon us, and many blue spots upon our skins. We cared no longer for the rope and the noose, and said that we would no more seek to entrap the wild things with it; but that was foolish. We spoke thus because we were sore, and our stomachs weak within us. It was not in us to forget the noose!

Humpback came to me, and upon my hurts bound chewed wet roots and leaves, of which she knew, and which cooled me, and very soon I was myself again, for there were no broken bones, and we strong men minded little such mauling as had come to Black Bow and me. But, as Humpback was doing this, I saw a face at the door, and it was the face of Dark Eyes, and I liked it not, for the red lips were drawn tightly, and the teeth showed. I did not like it, nor the glint in her great eyes. Then I looked up into the eyes of Humpback, and they were soft, and, somehow, curing. I do not know how eyes could be curing; but so seemed the eyes to me, and I liked them much. Long I thought then, and there came to me a great resolve. Humpback should come to me in my cave, and be my wife. Too long had I been alone.

The hump on her back lifted her little skin coat into a hummock, like that on the back of the young aurochs,

only that it stood out still more clearly, and she was short, though she was not squat, as I had once seen another humpbacked woman. She stooped hardly at all, and was slender and quick of movement, and knew well how to do all the things the mate of the hunter should do, and I knew that she would prove obedient and faithful. It was true that the naked children of the glen, and even some of the men and women, sometimes pointed at the hump, and cried aloud, and laughed. But what could that matter? They would point no longer when she came to my cave, for my cuff was heavy; and as for the men — well, they knew my arm. So I called to Black Bow — for it is not my way to wait when I have resolved — and we sat together upon our favourite big flat stone, and debated long. Truly Black Bow was in a stubborn mood that night.

I told him that I wanted Humpback for my mate, and that she must come to my hut; and he rose up and roared that it should not be; that she it was who did most of the labour, and that he would not part with her, though we were friends, and fished and hunted together, and were ready to fight each for the other, either against beast or man. His words did not change me. Perhaps they made me but have a greater desire for the woman who was so different from others, and my blood ran wild, and my anger rose at being thwarted, and I not only cajoled, but threatened, the man who had been my close companion. I told him that I would give him the best of my furred skins, and that I would bring much meat to his cave, and that, though we lived apart, we would be almost as one family, and, finally, he consented, it may be because of

the look on my face, which he knew left him no choice; and why should there be a fight between us, who had been friends so long? So that matter was settled, and we thought of other things, and laughed and talked once more of the noose and the taming. And of that talk came many happenings, and great ones.

We had been made wiser because of our adventure with the aurochs bull, and our memory of what followed the affair of Gnawbones and the wood leopard. We saw that we must seek the capture only of the grass-eaters, and among these the ones which were weak enough to be overcome in any struggle. Only the smaller beasts could we wisely or safely take, or, even better, the young of the greater ones. We agreed upon that. Then, so interested in our fancy did we become, that we planned for another trial. What came of that made life better for me.

There remained, even in this region, some of the little horses which had formerly been abundant, as I had known from the scarred bones which lay deep on the floors of caves in many hillsides. They were the bones of horses eaten by the Cave men of the past, and bore the marks of their strong teeth. Other bones there were, and in some of the caves marks on the stone walls showed that they were rude pictures of these same horses. And, as I have said, there were scattering herds of them left; and, after long toil, we decided that we would capture a wild horse.

Strong was the rope that Humpback plaited, and smooth and free was the noose at the end; and then, with food in our skin pouches, we went a day's journey to where we knew the creatures we sought fed in the valleys of the high hills. A night we slept there, and in the afternoon

of that day we saw a herd of the little horses feeding slowly toward us down the narrow valley. Rich was the grass, but here and there throughout the valley's narrowest part great rocks had fallen down from the heights, or had been rolled down in some ancient flood; and behind one of these we crouched, having first laid the open noose hidden in the grass some yards away. Should the herd feed near the rock, surely some one horse would find its feet within the snare. So we waited long, but nevertheless patiently, for this was a great undertaking.

Slowly the herd came on, and finally approached so near us that we no longer dared thrust forth our heads to note its progress. Finally its leader, a brown stallion, passed at some distance, while the herd fed scatteringly behind him. Then we saw, with delight, that, approaching so that she would pass not far from the rock, was a mare with a little colt beside her. Ah! could we but capture her! We remained as motionless as the great rock beside us, our hands gripping the rope, and our feet braced firmly. The slight wind blew toward us, and our scent would not reach the horses, and so they fed on, unknowing. Nearer and nearer came the mare, and at last she placed a fore foot fairly within the noose. I jerked the rope fiercely, the noose came up and closed upon the mare's leg tightly and fairly just above the knee; and, as she leaped, we clutched the rope with a shout, and leaned backward with all our might.

The herd, led by the stallion, broke into flight, and was unseen in a moment as it swept around a turn in the valley. Only the mare and her frightened colt remained, but with the mare we had all we could do. She was but

a little horse, and we were two great men; but with her first leap she pulled us from our feet, and it seemed that she might finally get away.

The struggle was long, but at last the desperate creature wearied of her leapings, and stood still, shuddering. We tried to approach her; but she began leaping again in her wild terror, and so threw herself, lying with her head down a little slope, and unable easily to regain her feet. We rushed in upon her, and pressed her head to the ground, and she was helpless. She lay very still, but all the time the young colt stumbled about, calling and whinnying in a weak way. What should we do?

The dogs we had often tied or led by a cord about the neck, so fastening it that it would not slip and strangle them, and why could we not do the same thing with the horse? So we unloosened the pinching rope from her leg, and tied the other end of it about her neck, so that it would not hurt her, but would not slip over her head, and then helped her to her feet again. She struggled more and more, but she was tired and heartbroken now, and at last we started, leading her to the glen, the colt following us clumsily.

Great was the clamour, and wild the shouting, when, the next day, Black Bow and I came into the glen, leading the little wild mare, very wearied and tame now, and followed by the little colt, which could hardly walk. There was much debate, and finally it was decided to build a wall across a wide ravine which ran into the glen, not far from the huts, and another wall across its foot, and there leave our captives, where they would have abundant food and water, and, it might be, thrive as well

as over the broader plain. All this was done, and the mare became fat and more tame, and the colt grew swiftly, and was played with by the children. It was a great achievement, and one much to the credit of Black Bow and me. But with the capture of these two the enterprise did not end. There were others of the glen as wise and daring as we, and these also finally caught wild horses with noosed ropes, and at last we had in the pasture in the fenced valley a herd which promised to become a larger one. We would have wild horses to kill and eat in time of strait, we thought; but then a curious thing happened, and because of it none of the wild horses was killed, and they were held the greatest of our possessions.

The little colt grew amazingly, and was strong and a pet of the children, who, as soon as it ceased to live upon its mother's milk, fed it daily upon the tender grasses, and made it as tame as one of the dogs. Then one day I saw a sturdy youth sitting astride its back, while another led the young animal about by its mane. It was an odd thing, and it came to me that if the colt could thus carry the boy, its mother could as easily carry a man, and I spoke of this to Black Bow, who was delighted with the thought.

"We will ride upon the mare," he declared.

And so we put a rope about the head of the mare, and Black Bow and I leaped upon the mare's back. Much she bounded about, and would have run away, but she was only a small horse, albeit strong and sturdy, and we clung to her easily. At last she tired, and then I took a shorter rope, and tied it about her nose, bringing it around over her neck, and fastening it again, so that I could pull either way, and again got on her back, and found that I could

guide and so drive her that I could make her carry me whichever way I would. I took her outside the pasture, and rode her far out upon the plain, and went farther and faster than I could have gone alone.

Henceforth I took her on my hunting, and so reached better fields, and brought my prey back upon her shoulders. It was a thing unthought of! The horse had become a part of man! There could be no other tribe like ours, until others, too, should have the horses, for soon Black Bow and others of the men had horses, and tamed them, and we became a swiftly moving and prosperous band, great in the hunting and surrounding and killing of things which before had escaped us.

And more I see! Why may not men some time tame other creatures — even, it may be, the great urus, the wild cattle, if we can catch them young, or the wild hogs which feed upon the acorns and beechnuts, and the flesh of which is so savoury in the nostrils, and so tender and sweet between the teeth? We are the masters, and men shall become very great!

And ever still in my mind was Humpback, my wife, the tender-eyed; and though I found game, and chased it, my thoughts were still upon her, and when it chanced that I had shot a young bustard I turned the head of the horse toward the village, for I wanted to look upon her again. I had not thought that a man could so desire to be with some one else; but I am glad that the feeling came to me, for sorely did Humpback need me that day.

There is a little flat island in the great river some half a league from the village, along the shores of which are many clams, but which most of the women do not visit,

because the current between the sand strip and the shore is very swift and dangerous. To this island, seeking clams, Humpback had told me she was going while I hunted, and I did not forbid her, for to her the current is as nothing, as she swims as strongly and silently as the beaver, and it came to me that the taste of the clams would be good when I came back to the hut.

To the hut I went first, but Humpback was not there, and then, taking only my bow, I went swiftly to where was the island in the river. Near it upon the land was a little wood, through which I passed, and so came out upon the long beach, with the island a short bow-shot away. What I saw then made me see red.

Upon the farther side of the narrow sand strip which made the island lay Humpback flat upon her face, so that only the poor little hump upon her back showed plainly, and from the hump stuck out an arrow. Upon the shore stood Dark Eyes, with her bow and arrows — for she was sure with her bow — fitting another arrow to the string. She had followed Humpback to kill her, and had found her on the island with no weapon and at her mercy. I could see it all. Humpback had thrown herself down at the island's farther and lower side, to avoid the arrows, only the hump showing, and this the cruel markswoman had impaled at the first shot. I strung my own bow in a moment, but roared aloud in my rage, which I should not by any means have done. As the sound struck her ears, Dark Eyes turned on the instant, then fled like the wind toward the forest near her. I loosed an arrow vengeancefully, but she was already distant when I shot, and I knew that, though the shaft seemed to pierce her shoulder, it had done her no grievous harm.

I threw aside my bow, and plunged into the river. I was soon at the side of Humpback, who rose to her feet as I came, and, despite her hurt, smiled up in my face. Very brave was Humpback.

I turned her about, and looked at the arrow in the hump, and shouted for joy. The head had passed through but a little beneath the skin, and she who was my mate was almost unharmed. I drew the arrow sharply forward by the head, and out, and there remained but a wound which would soon be healed.

"I knew she would seek to kill me," said Humpback.

But how she could know such a thing I could not understand. Woman can tell many things of which men know nothing.

So I took Humpback with me to the hut, and helped her dress her wound, and all was well again. I took my stone axe, and went into the cave of Black Bow, but Dark Eyes was not there. I know not what would have happened had I found her. I had promised Humpback that I would not kill her, but I know not. Perhaps Dark Eyes had gone mad, and it was not our custom to kill those who were mad and do not know. Yet was I afraid of Dark Eyes.

And the season went, and all was good. The seeds were ripening in the fenced places, we had captured more horses, and the hunting was good; so the bellies of the little children were plump, and there was nothing to fear from the winter, though the snow might come, and the game flee to the southward, and the ice lie thick upon the fishing places. It was good.

Better than the acorns, better even than the dried ber-

ries, do I like the nuts of the beech tree; and Humpback, my mate, knowing this, had gone often to the great beech forest which lay far up the river, and had brought a store of nuts for the winter. But still more I wanted; and so one day, at the time when the seeds were ripe, and the nuts were nearly fallen, I told her to gather yet more of the beechnuts, and went with her, for sometimes there was good hunting there, the grouse and bustard and the wild hogs coming to eat the nuts, which they liked as well as I. The land was high and rolling, and there were pleasant open spaces down into which the sun shone, making them warm, but sometimes bringing out a little brown snake, the bite of which was deadly.

These spaces had always been avoided by Humpback, my wise mate; and as I started to cross one of them she warned me, but I only laughed. I was standing in the midst of the opening even as she called to me, and, even as I laughed, I felt a sharp sting upon my ankle. I leaped aside, and, looking downward, saw one of the terrible little snakes gliding away through the thin grass. I struck blindly with my bow, and broke its back, killing it; but what could that avail me? I yelled aloud in fear, and ran to where Humpback, frightened, was standing beneath the trees. I told her what had happened, and she shrieked and put her arms about me. So we stood for a little time, and soon there came a numbness in my ankle, where I had been bitten, and then in my leg, and soon the deadness seemed to reach farther and farther all over me, and then came a dimness as I drew closer still to Humpback, and then all knowing passed!

CHAPTER VIII

THE DELUGE

BEES were humming in my head, and I did not like it. The humming hurt me. I opened my eyes and passed my hand across my forehead and brought it away with blood upon it. I began to understand now the humming of the bees, for I remembered dimly having heard them hum in my head at other times and of what hurt had been the cause. I must have struck there heavily. Yet all seemed strange. I looked about me, and looked upon what, assuredly, I had never seen before.

I was seated, I found, upon a thick cloak of bearskin, with my back against a rock, apparently some distance up the slope of a mountainside. This slope, which had a forest upon it here and there, and areas of dense thickets, fell toward the south and west to a wide lowland extending beyond the sight, and reaching, I thought, to the great sea, for now, vaguely, there came a recollection of happenings close at hand, all, as it seemed, of but an hour ago, or, it might be, of yesterday. The sun was streaming upon me warmly and my strength was coming to me slowly. I crawled to the side of the rock, where I could have a view to the north and east, and saw what I had expected; the ascent was steady though irregular and continued to a great height, the forests gradually disappear-

ing, while above, in the far distance, rose bald ranges. All this I saw, and it had to me some slight familiarity, as if I had looked upon it before for a little time. My effort in moving had been a little too great for me, and I crept back to my couch, where I rested with closed eyes. I would soon be myself again. Already the bees were humming in my head less noisily.

I even slept for a time, and when I awoke I felt stronger. I raised myself against the rock and looked more closely upon what was near me. There were objects which for a little time I wondered at, but which, in the end, aided my memory and, though for a time but partially, brought back my understanding.

Almost within my reach lay a bow and a stone axe and spear. They were faultless, and I laughed aloud when I saw them. They were wonderful weapons. The bow especially was surprising. It was of some dark wood such as I could not then remember to have seen before, and, though shaped properly and with perfect symmetry, was so massive that it seemed to me for the moment that only the arms of the great brown bear might bend it. Unconsciously, I looked at my own arm and felt myself comprehending a little more. Dressed in bearskin I was, but arms and legs were bare, and it seemed to me that I was thewed like a bull of the aurochs herd. Could that mighty weapon be my own bow? Oddly enough, the powerful thing was strung, and that troubled me. A bow, weak or strong, should not be left to strain itself, and surely such a good bow as this should not be so neglected. It must have been dropped as it was in the midst of a fight, but it was not good for it to lie thus tautened, and all my in-

instinct was to somehow release the weapon from its strain. My strength, which had gone from me because of my hurt, was fast returning now, and I reached out and grasped the thing which must be so good in the hands of hunter or fighting man who had the power to use it. I struggled to my feet and, with my knee upon the middle of the bow and what was a great wrenching effort, managed to unstring it. There was no doubt about it! The bow was surely mine! If, with only a part of my strength, I could thus bend it, surely when all myself I could draw an arrow to the head upon the mighty thing. What arrows they were, too — one lying upon the ground beside me and others in a great skin quiver, straight-shafted and with spearlike flint heads keen of edge and polished so smoothly that they might, sent from that bow, pass fairly through the body of wolf or man or reach the heart of bear or urus. The axe and spear, too, were as fine in their way as was the bow, and their heads were as keen of edge and smoothly finished as were those of the arrows. There showed dried blood upon the edge of each, as also, I found, upon the flint knife in my belt, hafted into the ribbed part of a stag's horn, and a weapon as perfect as the others. Surely I was well equipped for facing beast or man!

As my strength came so also did a better perception and a sudden compelling desire to learn who I was and where. I rose to my feet again and walked about a little, albeit somewhat unsteadily at first. Then what was lying beside a clump of bushes at a little distance attracted my attention, and I moved toward it. Two dead men were sprawled out there, one with his head crushed in, the other with an arrow driven through his body so fiercely

that its head stood forth. I drew out the arrow, though it came hardly, and saw that it must be one of mine, a mate to the one lying beside the rock and to those in the quiver. The crushed head of the other body must also be my handiwork, for it was cloven downward to between the eyes, and strong must have been the arm and heavy the axe to shear through bone so deeply.

I considered the dead men more carefully. They were not men, one would think, to greatly fear. Their arms and legs were not strong-muscled and their faces were flat and ugly. Each was clad in a single garment of goat-skin, belted about the middle, and carrying a pouch, together with a quiver at the hip. A broken spear lay beside one of the men, its head unpolished and its size but puny compared with that which I now knew to be mine. I wondered from what strange tribe these men had come?

But where was I? Who was I? The puzzle grew upon me. Surely I had seen this land before, though it seemed to me I had never known it well. I could have seen it only for a little time. Suddenly I turned. From behind a huge group of rocks at a little distance, but farther up the slope, rose the sound of voices, and it came to me that I had heard those same voices before, though I could not remember where. The voice of Black Bow was not among them. Then I thought of bushes and the deadly little snakes, but here was no such country. I was lost again.

The blood was pulsing through my veins now; the buzzing of the bees in my head had ceased entirely and I could walk more strongly and freely. I put on my quiver with its few remaining arrows, thrust my axe into my belt, restrung my bow, and with it in one hand and my spear

in the other, went toward the rocks from behind which came the hoarse but, somehow, not unfamiliar voices. I need not have made ready for fight. As I turned at the end of the rocks and came in sight of those behind it there rose a shout which was not one of threatening, but rather of rude welcome. The sight astonished me. There were at least a hundred men there, some lying down, some wandering about or seated upon the rocks, while a group of them, those whose voices I had heard, were gathered together engaged in some debate. All were armed as I was and clad in nearly the same manner. As I looked upon their faces recollection came upon me swiftly. They were my comrades; they were of the wanderers and raiders, my own restless, often marauding tribe, who had come from afar, facing perils all unknown, of fighting men or fighting beast, but led on ever by an instinct for plundering and adventure. We knew, as yet, no other tribe like ours or one of which we were afraid. They were brawny men, these brother tribesmen, but among them all was none to boast a front so bull-like nor of such brawn and strength as mine. They closed about me with hoarse shouts and much laughter.

“We left you by the rock that you might sleep a little and be strong again,” said one to me. It was Old Horn, our leader, who spoke, a man huge and gray-headed and gray-bearded and rough of way and to whom I was as his right hand in the fighting or the hunting.

“We knew that you were but stunned. No Goatskin may split such a head as yours!”

I understood now; we had fought again with the Goatskins, as we called them, from lack of any other name, and

because they were clad in the skins of goats, which creatures they must have grown and bred. They were a tribe of the wide valley lying between the mountains and the great sea, and they had assailed us promptly when we first entered their borders, only a few days before the latest fight. They could not match us and we slew many of them and drove them back. We had not thought they would attack us again, and so had been somewhat careless and were unprepared when they came upon us in the early morning. We had beaten them back again only after a fierce struggle in which scores of them had been slain as before. It was in the midst of the fight that I had gone down under the blow delivered by a Goatskin who had come upon me from behind and who was speared a moment later by one of my companions. My comrades had seen that I was but stunned and so had brought my cloak after the fight was over and left me lying upon it by the rock, that I might recover in the warmth of the sun. Little knew we of further help than this to the wounded in battle. They had done for me the best they knew, and it was enough.

I had no trouble in remembering all now, of who we were and of our adventures and our plans. Far had we fared from the shores of what was called the Black Sea to the northwest, though why such name had been given it I could never understand, for its waters were a glittering blue, a blue like that of the sky, only a little deeper. Our entire tribe had come to the sea from a country still farther to the northwest, just as our great grandfathers, so the elder men told us, had come from a region many hundreds of leagues to the westward, where was the mighty

ocean. Our own tribe had come to the southern shores of the Black Sea, seeking what might be better hunting and seeding grounds and, assuredly, a warmer and more pleasant climate. Not that it was very cold where the stream, later called the Danube, had its source far, far to the north and west, and following the banks of which we had taken our way, but our tribe was ever restless and followed its own fancies as to its abode. So we had wandered until we reached the sea and had drifted southward along its shores until we found its southern shore, crossing a deep but narrow strait which we thought must connect it with another larger sea, which we learned from tribes we had met lay still farther to the south. This strait we had crossed easily in boats we made and then were fairly on the southern shore of this sea called Black. Here was our place; here should our village be! The climate was warm, there were broad seeding grounds and much game in the forests and on the plains. Here we established ourselves, and the women sowed and reaped and there was much fishing, and the men hunted or went on expeditions of venture, for we were sometimes raiders.

There was excitement in the hunting. The huge and dangerous beasts of the past of which the old men prattled in the legends they related were now gone, but in this new land to which this vanguard of our race had come were others which did not exist in the region from which we had come, and which we soon learned to regard with caution. There was a monster, maned yellow beast called the lion, as large almost as the brown bear we feared in the country from which we had come, and there were leopards and bears of a kind new to us, and other beasts of prey not to

be faced wisely single-handed. But there were deer in abundance, and the wild ox, the urus, and the aurochs, and we did not lack for meat. From such a village in such a region had come our party which had battled with the Goatskins.

We were but warriors, dangerous raiders, perhaps the first among the Cave and Hut men, and this long march of ours was the greatest we had ever undertaken. Much we longed now for the women and the cakes made from the crushed grain, for now we must subsist on flesh alone, and such nuts and fruits as we might find upon our way, but we sought more plunder before returning. Fine skins we had taken and many trinkets such as women delight in, and such as were sometimes worn by the fighting men, but nowhere had we taken prizes of fine axes or spears or arrow-heads, for nowhere had we found weapons to compare with our own. We had met no force to equal us in any village we had found, and the word of our advance must have travelled fast and far, for many places where men lived, some in caves and some in huts of bark, we found abandoned, the people having fled into hiding in the forests. Only these puny creatures of the valley before us had assailed us fairly, relying upon their numbers, which were great. Weak as they were, they had beset us somewhat sorely and in the two fights ten of us had been killed and many others hurt. But we had killed scores of the Goatskins and we did not think they would dare to face us again. After a little rest we were to go down into the valley and ravage it, and then, with what we might find worth taking, we would return to our own people by the sea and have again the women and the grain cakes. We

were joyous and boisterous of mood that day, feasting upon venison and lying idly about where the sun shone upon the mountainside. As for me, my strength had all returned.

We slept well that night, wrapped in our coats of bear-skin, while sentinels watched lest the Goatskins, despite their losses, might come upon us suddenly, and woke to a morning as bright as I had ever seen. The sun blazed fiercely down and by noontime it became so hot that we sought the shade of the rocks, where we lay panting. There had been a little wind in the morning, but this had died away and the leaves upon the bushes did not move. All the world was still as the dead, and, as the sun dropped toward the west, it seemed to change from golden to almost red. The air became strangely heavy and was hard to breathe. The sky was clear, save where, far to the south and west, a cloud hung low on the horizon. It was lighted from above; but low down, close to what were the waters of the sea, there ran along it a strip of darkness. All was strange and it affected our minds, though very great must be the real danger to alarm such reckless men as we. We had never felt such curious dread before, and became the more fearful because we could not tell the reason of it to ourselves. Then followed what was more alarming. There came a tremor to the ground beneath our feet, as if it were alive, then suddenly it heaved and rocked. Three times this happened swiftly, as we leaped for our weapons and other gear and ran together out into a great open space, to await whatever might come to us, and it was well that we did so! The whole earth suddenly lifted and sank again and the huge rocks beside which we had rested and those

above them were heaved upward from their beds and went crashing down the slope of the mountainside, though we escaped them all. At the same time, from the westward, came the sound of such bursting explosion and such thundering and appalling roar as surely man had never heard before!

The world above was changing. In a moment, as it seemed, the white cloud in the sky low down to the westward had climbed halfway up the heavens, shining gloriously at its crest, while from its base, climbing even more swiftly and eating up the whiteness as some monster might devour its prey, the black cloud followed. Upward it rushed until it hid the sun, and deep gloom followed the brightness. There came another awful roar to the westward and then another, and then the rocking of the earth grew less. Still the black cloud kept towering and climbing until it overhung us and still rushed on until all the sky was blotted out and we were left in almost utter darkness. Then came what threatened us with sudden death!

The heavy air had been given a new quality, a surcharge of sulphurous fumes in which we gasped for life, hiding our heads in our skin cloaks. For some time this lasted, but finally there came some abatement to the suffocation and we breathed more freely.

The ominous darkness continued, but, though we could not see, we knew that something was happening all around us. There were fearsome cries and a thousand strange sounds which were frightening because we could not understand them. Then came a sudden opening in the gray pall above us — caused, it may be, by some whirl-

wind of the sky — and the sunlight streamed down for a few moments. We saw now whence came the sounds!

The world seemed full of living things fleeing in wild terror before approaching evil. The earth was crowded with the desperate fugitives; the sky above was filled with thousands of them. Showing against the briefly lightened clouds, screaming their different cries, were an innumerable host of seafowl sweeping over us in whirling flight, and, as they neared the mountain, streaming away by some common instinct in a great mass toward the northwest, seeking, it might be, the shores of the sea from which we had come. There were vultures and eagles among them, but these seemed to be flying straight ahead toward the mountain-tops. It was a marvellous and dreadful flight.

But strange, impressive and alarming as was the flight of the birds, it was nothing to what was happening on the earth beneath. Here was an exhibition of mortal terror close at hand. There was no limit to it. All the beasts of the region, great and small, were coming toward us in a wild and senseless tide. A great stag, with his does, swept by us like the wind, and next a thundering urus; then, strangest of all, came four lions together in long leaps — the country was full of them — straight toward us and regarding us not at all! Over the heads of some of us they leaped and were gone in a moment. It was this happening, I think, which most affected us and gave us a greater sense of fear for ourselves. And so the terrible flight continued. Leopards, wild-cats, all the beasts of prey, and all the harmless animals, they came in a rushing army, whole herds of deer and flocks of goats, and all the grazing things, and the little creatures of the wood and

plain. But among all this horde of fugitives there were no men. Where were the Goatskins? I could not understand it, until I remembered that, perhaps a league to the south of us, there rose in the plain a solitary high mountain. To this must have fled such of the tribe as perceived their danger in time. It was a cone-shaped mountain with no great area at its summit. What scenes, I thought, must be there now!

And then, even while the sun still shone through the cloud-rift, came something which made this flight of bird and beast as nothing, for swift death seemed certain for us. From the south came such a roar of waters as never could have been heard before or since, a roar which did not cease and but grew louder and more full of dreadful menace every moment. Then we saw! Looming almost mountain high, raging white at its top, a mountainous wave reaching across the whole valley and appearing certain to engulf us! It came toweringly and roaringly. It broke upon the mountainside with such stunning thunder as I may not describe, and swept upward, carrying back with its terrific force even some of the rocks the earthquake had cast downward.

Then, after a few moments, the waters receded somewhat, but not greatly, for another vast wave loomed in the far distance. And then, as suddenly as it had come, the opening in the sky was closed, and we were again in darkness. But no longer about us was the sound of fleeing things.

We had sped upward when we saw the coming of the monster wave, but it did not quite reach, even with its surging wash, the spot where we had been, for we were

well up the mountain, and now we returned and gathered together all we had and carried it a long way higher. Then came the thundering of wave after wave against the mountainside, but none so terrifying as the first, and, finally, these ceased and we concluded they were done; there was only the roaring and washing of a turbulent sea upon the steep and rocky shore. Leaving a few men on guard to rouse us if need be we lay down and tried to sleep. Rain fell in torrents, but to us, hardened as we were, that was nothing. It was what had come with the dreadful day that had shaken all of us. Fearless or dull and stupid must have been the man among us who slept well that night!

Morning came, but with it little of the light of day, though, as our eyes became accustomed to the gloom, we could make out objects indistinctly. The rain continued to fall in a torrent, and this made seeing things still more difficult. All was nearly still on land; there was no sound save that of the lashing waters of the new sea and the splashing of the rain. I stumbled down to the shore, as commanded by Old Horn, and looked about me as well as I could. There was little to see or learn except that the waters had risen steadily during the night. There were bodies of drowned creatures left by the first great wave, lying about here and there, and that was all. The day passed in dread discomfort.

The next morning showed the water still rising, while there was no abatement of the tremendous rain, and so with the day succeeding. The fearful downpour continued and the waters still rose. Then came something like a panic among men as fearless as any upon earth. The dark waters beneath which lay such multitudes of

drowned, of man and beast, came ever lapping upward hungrily toward us, and none could tell when the rising would cease. How we longed for boats, we who could handle boats so well! Then, in our desperation, we would make rafts! The work was begun at once. Driftwood tossed up by the great tidal wave was dragged together, dead trunks lying further up the mountainside were hacked into lengths and bound side by side with withes and strips of skin, and the work went forward feverishly. We had made rafts before. It was good for us, this work with its faint promise, distracting our minds somewhat from the perils we were in.

As for myself I was but a poor workman that day, despite my strength. All appeared so dismal and so hopeless. The whole world seemed like a bad dream and I had many thoughts such as had never come to me before. No longer did I care what might be our plunder from this raiding journey of the band into unknown regions. I thought of the clean sandy beaches and the pleasant huts by the distant great sea and of the people we had left there, and a great desire came upon me to be with them again. Would the waters never cease rising until even the mountain was overwhelmed and we would have no further refuge and must die strangling at its top? It seemed to me then as if it might be so, though of course the thought was foolish. Then there came before my eyes the face of a girl with a leaf of scarlet in her hair. The face would not go away from me, the face of Red Leaf, as she had come to be called, because in the autumn, when the colours of the leaves changed, she always gathered many of the brightest and kept them in a skin bag in the hut of her

father and mother and always wore one braided somewhere in her hair, which was as black as the wing of the raven or the black panther of the woods, and against which the scarlet ever shone out brightly.

She was not tall, this girl of my tribe, not like many of the others, great-limbed and full-bosomed and strong of arm in pulling at the nets we had learned to make from the tough inner bark of certain trees and with which we caught abundance of the seashore fishes, nor was she as deft at the trapping of small things, or in the gathering of nuts and fruits, and, surely, she was not a fitting mate for such a strong fighting man as I, but — I could not help it — she of the red leaf had long been more to me than any other of the young women of my clan. Men are but foolish with women and unreasoning as the queer brown bird which lines its nest with glittering things. But she always smiled, this Red Leaf, and she was so small and slender and had such eyes, asking so much and telling so much, that the fancy ever grew upon me that I wanted her in a hut of my own that I might but play with her and bring her warm furs and feed her well. What need had I, Scar, of one of the great woman creatures of my tribe save for the cooking and the making of skin garments? And for these things Red Leaf would suffice, for, within the hut, though laughing, she was most diligent. It was odd that my heart should be bigger within me for her than for the others, yet it may be that it was best. So have I seen the grisly leader of the wolf pack have ever at his side in the running some light-hued, slender she wolf, the slightest of the yelping lot. That I cannot understand; I know but that the only face of woman I saw upon the

mountainside was the face of Red Leaf. But even this face I saw not all the time, for there were the waters and we must needs look to ourselves.

Night found the rafts well advanced in the building and we all felt more hopeful. When morning came it seemed more like a real daybreak. I can hardly describe it, but there was an indefinable something, a feeling in the air as if a change had come, a change for the better, though the rain still fell in floods. Work was eagerly resumed, and as I had been told to do, I went down the mountain to the shore of the sea, to note whatever the rise might be and went to a great rock where had been the water's limit yesterday, the waves barely washing its base. I could not believe my eyes! the waters were receding! Between the rock and the waves was now a space of yards!

I bounded up the mountainside to where the band were at work upon the rafts, and yelled out what I had seen. There was a joyous answering roar, the stone axes, the thongs and withes, all things in use, were cast aside, and the band streamed down together to the shore to assure themselves that I was not mistaken. Scarcely had we regained the camp when came another heartening thing. The rain, which had fallen in such torrents unceasingly for days and nights, began to slacken and in a little time had ceased entirely. The vast leaden pall which had hung over the world began to lighten somewhat, as well, and again we felt that there was a sun beyond it. It was a new world, and to us a glorious one!

We could see things far away again, and we looked for the lone mountain to the south where must be huddled what few might remain alive of the Goatskins. It was

nearly submerged. Its peak stood out merely a little dot on the wide expanse of water. Those clustered upon it must be assured that they were the only human beings left alive. How the legend of destruction of all other mankind would go down among them! How their children and their children's children would transmit the story, and how the old men of many scores of centuries later would repeat it to the youth! How it would pass in the fullness of time, to generations more civilized, how the Chaldean priests would make of it a story of supernatural significance, to be enlarged by those teachings in the cities of clustered splendour where the Tigris and Euphrates join, and how, finally, it would be accepted and adapted by the prophets of a great tribe of shepherd kings, whose petty battles would, perhaps, become a credited part of the world's history. How, too, might it become part of a mighty faith — a faith encompassing the world!

There was a great blasted tree, not very high but with enormous outspreading limbs extending dead and bare, which stood not far from the utmost limit of the waters, and which had become strangely peopled on the day of the earthquake and first tidal wave, as I had noticed dimly on my visits to the shore. Tired in their flight or seeking the tree but as a place of refuge, creatures of earth and air had peopled it and even sought shelter at its base, unmoving and stupefied throughout the days and nights of ceaseless rain and darkness. There stood together a stag and a great brown bear each mindless of the other. Upon the huge outspreading lower limbs crouched half a dozen more of the leopard cats of the region and as many of the sort of smaller bears which climb, and, above them

scores of the lesser climbing things, while above them still perched wearied birds of many kinds, from those of the woods and fields to vultures and croaking ravens. Bats from the flooded caves hung dangling by hundreds from the smaller branches. It was a black dream of a tree, a tree of life in death. And now, it suddenly awoke to life! The stag raised its head snortingly and went leaping up the mountain, and the bear followed him shufflingly, followed in turn by all the other animals. The birds took flight; and I watched this departure gladly, for it seemed a proof that our sufferings were really ended. The birds and beasts know many things unknown to man.

But whence had come this awful catastrophe which had brought such tremendous death and changed a part of the face of the earth? Much I thought upon it. Had the fearful earthquake, such as never was before, but rent apart the mountain chain between the lower inland sea and the great ocean to the westward and so let in the mighty rush of water, raising the level of the sea to that of the ocean itself, the ocean no man had ever passed and the awful limit of which no man could tell? This seemed to me the reason of all that had come, but who could tell assuredly? The water kept at an even level now. It had become as it would stay. The land of the Goatskins lay deep beneath its waters, and life in this part of the world must subsist only upon the higher plains to the south and east, the curtailed land of future Palestine.

The gray of the sky became lighter, the vast curtain parted into floating clouds, and the radiance of the sun burst upon the world again. But upon what a scene that radiance fell!

The sea was giving up its dead, and upon its surface

everywhere their bloated bodies rocked and swung. There was not a beast of all the region whose carcass was not a part of the water's ghastly burden, nor were there the bodies of beasts alone! The Goatskins, hundreds of them, were coming to us again! But the horror of it all was not in the sight of the bodies alone. Thousands of ravens and vultures had come to the tremendous feast and the air was vibrant with the beating of the wings of myriads more still flocking from all directions save that of the sea itself. They were riding on the bodies and tearing at them, gorging themselves. The clamour and their croaking drowned out all other sounds. Close to the shore where I stood watching, a huge vulture rode on the body of a man, a Goatskin, devouring at its leisure, and so the horrible scene extended everywhere. It was a carnival of unclean birds!

The sight before us was one not long to be endured, even by men of such hardihood as made up our wandering band. The limbs of the lately beast and bird burdened tree were now bare and white, and as its inhabitants had fled, so would we from this dread region. We gathered our belongings together as swiftly as we might and took up our long march, eager to leave such land of death and desolation.

Easily did we live as to food, for the forests teemed with game because of the multitude of creatures driven from the valley. There were dangers, too. I have said that it was a region of lions. Now we came upon them everywhere, restless and savage, so that none of us wandered far from the band alone. Yet one day, near night-fall, just after we had encamped at the foot of a great barren boulder-strewn slope, I ventured up among the rocks

alone. Surely there could be no lions there. Then, just as I turned about a huge boulder, I came upon a great maned monster face to face! I could not fly, for should I attempt it, I knew he would be upon me in an instant. There was nothing left to me but to face him as I might. I could crouch with the butt of my spear planted in the ground and await the spring of the monster. He crept a little nearer, his eyes blazing like coals, and his body held close to the ground taut as the string of a bow. He was within three yards of me now. I braced myself for the coming shock, hopeless, indeed, but desperately resolved to make all of my one slight chance. Fear seemed to have left me. I counted myself as already dead, and I was filled with a great rage. Could I hold the spear so firmly and move it with even eye so well that it would impale him at the climax of his leap, his own weight doing all the work of a mighty thrust? Calm, as fiercely strained as the lion himself, I was now. Closer to the ground he crouched, and then, with a hideous roar, he sprang.

I did not fail myself! Like a rock I knelt; braced and with certain eye I aimed the spear between the huge forelegs and on the broad tawny breast, even in that fraction of a moment when the beast was in the air almost above me. Fairly in the breast the spear-head struck and, with a roar of beastly suffering, the lion, impaled, came down upon me. I was borne to earth and, even as he turned in his agony, a stroke from his mighty paw crushed my right arm at the elbow, the bones cracking sickeningly. Then his great jaws sought my throat to tear it. Never again should I gaze across our Northern Sea; never again should I look upon the face of the slender Red Leaf.

CHAPTER IX

THE KITCHEN-MIDDENITES

GREAT rollers were coming in upon what must be a rugged beach, for their clamour was appalling. Such roaring, thunderous sound of water I did not remember to have heard before, and I wondered where I was. It was dark where I lay upon what seemed a mass of weed in a hut-like place, having at the side a low door reminding one of the entrance to a burrow of some animal. It was nearing morning now, for it began slowly to grow lighter and I could distinguish my surroundings better. There was little to consider, though upon one side of the strange place lay what I knew to be a stone axe such as I had carried once, and there were other things which might be weapons, but the use of some of which I could not then understand. I knew well that I could not be quite myself, else I would remember more. I was dazed as I had seen wild beasts sometimes become when great rocks had been rolled down from heights above and some had been struck upon the head and wandered about unknowingly and helplessly. Only I had no pain. I felt strong, and I was hungry.

I crawled out through the low doorway and looked about me. There was much to see. In the east was the glow of the rising sun, its first clear rays making glitter the crests of the rollers which were tumbling and roaring

in over reefs and boulders, and climbing far up a long sandy beach. There had been a storm. The beach, which was a wide one, extended from the shore backward to nearly the edge of a dense forest, and along this edge rose a great line of huts from some of which smoke was arising. The huts were rude affairs, built of driftwood and brush and resembling generally the one I had just emerged from, which stood at the southern end of the long line. There was something more. Directly in front of the line of huts, and parallel with them, rose a mound of regular height almost equalling that of the huts themselves and cutting off the view of the sea save where wide passages led through it here and there. It was the view of this mound which brought me to my senses, for, as I now knew, I had been dazed only by a dream, a dream of warm winds and hunting. All that was gone now, and I knew that I was but looking upon the huts inhabited by my own people, the shell-fish eaters, and that the vast mound extending before them, and which exhaled a mighty odour, was but the refuse of our eating. The "Kitchen-middens," were such mounds as these to be called by far distant future peoples. Not alone were shells in the mound, but the bones of countless birds and beasts and fish, for we were hunters and fishermen as well as plunderers of the enormous beds of oysters and mussels and cockles and other shell-fish, and of the toothsome sea-snails in the shallow waters. It was to our disadvantage, though we did not know it, that such an abundance of sea food lay at our very doors, for so we had become more slothful and indifferent and were making no advancement. This I knew because when any ac-

cretions to our numbers on our peninsula crossed the narrow strait we called the Skaw, between us and the mainland, they bore better weapons than we and knew more of many things. We remained as we had been when our first ancestors crossed from the lands beyond the Kattegat — the sea bay connected at its ends with those seas the North and Baltic — and remained upon this jutland because of the abundant shell-beds they discovered.

Better for us had we all been hunters and far rangers. It was a land for it, this Jutland. Wonderful flint, the finest for spear and arrow-heads and knives, abounded everywhere, and game was plentiful. What quarry for skilled hunters there was in those great forests of pine, at this time yielding fast to other forests of beech and oak, and on the grassy plains of the interior! There were wandering herds of reindeer and white elk and the urus and red deer; there were bears and wolves and lynx and wild boars and a host of the smaller things. In the streams were many beaver; in the lakes were swan and geese and lesser waterfowl, and in the marshes millions of woodcock and other birds as succulent. But of all this spoil of bird and beast we took slight toll because of our ease of living, though there were hunters among us and men who were not lacking in courage. Some of the more hardy had crossed the peninsula to the western shore against which rolled the sea. It was told that one adventurer had even put forth to the northward in his boat and had been sucked down into the great maelstrom there which roars by Varo Island.

None remained upon this shore, because the winds were chill and there were no beds of shell-fish to make the

living easier. On our own side, it is true, the winters were cold, but some of the game remained in the forest, there was still the fishing, through the ice or from the boats far out, and we had always much provided of dried meat and fish, and were never in danger of absolute starvation. We were as listless as the seals, which minded not the seasons.

At work in the shell-beds we were indeed expert, either in the digging at low tide or in the dredging from boats with rakes made of wood with teeth of stag's horn, and at the fishing, as well, we were all skilful. The big fish were no safer from us than were the smaller ones. Those which were accustomed to come to the surface of the water we hunted with javelins barbed with bone. To the end of the javelin's shaft would be attached a strong cord at the end of which was fastened securely an inflated bladder. The javelin we could throw to a long distance and with the greatest surety, and the fishing with it was most successful. The impaled fish might dive deeply, but the wind-filled bladder would pull upward and, as the fish neared the surface, reveal his whereabouts; another javelin cast into him would make his diving still more difficult until, at last, he became exhausted and, so, easily speared. Sometimes not the javelin, but the bow, would be used in this sort of fishing. There were the leister or fish-trap, too, which was of service and of course, and, chiefly, the barbed bone hooks we used upon our lines. We were an indolent people, we of the kitchen-middens, yet we might have been still more so had there been caves along the shore such as we knew were inhabited by those who lived in other regions, but there were no such natural homes to occupy, and we must build our own shelters

against wild beasts and winter's cold. This was by no means difficult, for driftwood and the wood of the forest were at our hands, and our homes were but rude ones, varying in size according to the number in the family, some built up squarely, but most of them not unlike my own in shape. In summer they were not uncomfortable, and in winter they were covered with sods or earth, and were kept warmer by a skin across the entrance and the burning of beech sticks in shells filled with oil from the seal or certain fish. Sometimes in winter, too, blocks of ice would be built up into an enclosure of the huts, keeping out the cold as well as could anything else. Fuel of all kinds was about us, but we paid little attention to our fires in any weather. We had become hardened to the climate.

To the south our land was endless, so far as we could tell, but we knew its boundaries well to the north and east and west. To the west were the blending seas; the Kattegat lay east of us, with no great island in sight, but with many little islets along the shore. Upon these islets a few of our people lived since the shell-beds were beside and among them, and there was gained an added degree of safety from any sudden danger. It was easy to row to the nearby shore for hunting or for any other purpose.

Toward the north our peninsula gradually lessened in width until it ended in the Skagen Rock. Between us and the rock was a weary distance, along which, not near together, but wherever the shell-beds were, lived other clans of our race, with whom we had slight dealing.

Of laws or government we had little, though we usually

recognized a sort of chief, a man not regularly elected but coming to the place by a sort of general admission, because of his own good qualities, or his shrewdness. To old Rolf, our leader, I was the main support and aid in most of what he sought to accomplish, first because I was the strongest of our clan and the greatest ranger of the forest and most careless of risk, and more, it may be, since I was a silent man, unmated and unlikely to be fooled or thwarted. We were friends, and, after a fashion, as I have said, he relied upon me much. We did not need laws greatly, even such as were observed by the more savage tribes of which we had heard. In such ease did we live that there was no battling for food or clothing and, if sometimes there was rivalry for the possession of a woman, she was left to decide the matter herself, and it was rarely that the loser complained when he thus had two against him. We were not all of an aggressive ancestry, as was plain, though, on occasion, we could show courage. We were bold either in or upon the water — I have seen a man kill a shark with a flint knife, and have seen another dive many times in treacherous eddies to bring upward and to life again one which had gone down stunned from a blow — but very rarely were there affrays, and few cared to face the dangerous forest creatures; I alone rejoiced in that. It may be that I was of a different breed from my companions, that there was a strain in me of some far back marauder of the region from which our tribe had come. Of that I cannot tell; I only know that I liked the forest better than the water, and the hunting better than the fishing. Much was I relied upon for meat and skins, for which I received oysters and fish and oil and many other

things I needed, such as weapons of flint and whatever else I lacked in my living. Always I hunted alone.

Not much did most of the shell-fish people think. Each day sufficed for itself, though a little they regarded the strange things that no man may understand. Our dead, we knew, would not come back to us, yet we had regard for the bodies, and buried them deeply beneath great heaps of stones in a rocky place not far from the village. We did not want wolves to get them, and there was, besides, another feeling which I cannot explain. One of the old men said that the dead would come back after many years, but none of us believed him. If it were so, why did not those who died very long ago appear? And why should we die at all? But upon these matters we did not think much. We ate and slept.

Dull, though, as were usually the people of the clan, the strange and mysterious would sometimes arouse as it alarmed them. There was one time when even the bravest of the hunters feared to venture deeply into the forest at night, especially toward a little lake to the west where the urus were accustomed to feed and beside which, on the north, was a stretch of forest with dim winding paths beneath the shadow of its dense foliage and many pools fringed with the rich grass the urus liked. Concerning this forest strange tales began to go about in the clan. There was a ghostlike monster there — perhaps the thing that made the wind bring pestilence and death as it had once in the past — a great white shape that moved about in the dark alleys of the forest, and which was not a thing to be wisely faced by man. More than one of the hunters declared he had seen the white thing,

and the people dreaded to enter the woods in search of fruit or nuts and roots. Over all this I puzzled much. What could the white thing be? After much persuasion, I induced Leuk, one of the hunters, to go with me at night to learn, if we might, what was the mystery. It was with difficulty that I secured his company, but, in truth, I did not greatly care to go alone. There are many things of which we do not know. It was somewhat of a dark night on which we went, but I knew that the moon would rise in time and that we could see about us more distinctly. It did not take us long to reach the lake, and there we waited, hidden in a thicket by its shore.

From the forest near us came many sounds. There were the "pad-padding" along of the smaller hunting creatures, calls of the night birds and sometimes the snarl of the prowling wood-cat, but above these and continuous was another noise, one of crashing of branches in the thickets as some large body passed through them, and the thud of ponderous feet and frequent husky gruntings. I knew that the urus were feeding in the glades.

Very near us was an opening, or rather a sort of indentation, in the forest, and across this in the dimness we could see dark shadows passing, though we could not distinguish what they were. After a time these moving shadows disappeared. And then, all at once, loomed up a great white shape, passing, without a sound it seemed, across the glade!

Leuk sank shudderingly to the ground, and I, with a feeling in my belly and throat I did not like, stood gazing at where the ghostly thing had disappeared. We did not speak; we but waited in wonder and, it may be, with not

a little apprehension; and as we thus waited the moon rose, and through the open space to the eastward poured her light upon the lake and its surroundings, making all nearly light as day. And then, almost at the moment, emerged with stately tread from the forest into the glade again, a majestic snow-white urus!

Our fear was gone, but it was succeeded by a great astonishment. Who had ever before seen the marvel of a white urus? I had, it is true, seen a white crow, and once a snow-white beaver, and knew that such things happened, but such freak of what makes living things was a wonder on such a scale. However, the mystery was solved and the fear which was undefined departed from the clan, though it was long before the more timid lingered much about the pleasant lake. Greatly did I desire the skin of the white urus, but he had drifted away with his companions and I never saw him again. The needless scare had taught the people no lesson. They had still the dread of the mysterious.

So passed the inactive and indifferent days, but not for long with me.

There came the strangest, as it was the most important, adventures of my life. Near the point of our northward extending Jutland had grown up a fierce and vigorous clan, greater hunters and fighters than we, who had decided to leave the place they inhabited, because of the exhaustion of their oyster beds. Such movement by a clan was no uncommon thing, because, though the hunting and fishing might be usually good, there were times when they failed, and, besides, as was considered by my own people, the oysters and mussels and other shell-fish

were easier to gather and had, furthermore, become the food to which the people were most accustomed and which, some thought, best nourished them. Far to the south and past our own and other clans must this one go to where it was said there were more beds of great richness. There were sometimes runners between the clans, and we knew of the migrating band which was already on its way. It chanced that I, at this time, was about to set out on a solitary hunt to the northward to reach the shores of a bay where were many of a small animal, a sort of sable, having a wonderful fur of which I wished to secure enough to make a cloak, not because I wished to wear such a cloak myself, but because I might trade it for many things.

I was two days on my journey and reached the bay as night was coming on. I made a fire, turning a sharpened stick swiftly into a dry one, as was our way — the fire being necessary to keep at a distance the prowling beasts — and, after eating my supper of dried venison and fish, lay down to sleep. It was not for long. I was awakened by noises in the wood to the north, and, seizing my weapons, slipped into the dense bushes at the edge of the forest. The noise I had heard was that of the loud voices of men, and I did not know who these strange wanderers might be. They emerged presently upon the beach, a great company of men, women and children. Some of the men gathered about my fire curiously and there was discussion, but they made no search in the wood. They thought, doubtless, that it had been built by some wandering hunter whom their advance had frightened. They were right in that. My apprehension did not go when, as they began the

building of many more fires, intending to encamp, I had a good view of them in the light of the growing flames.

The men were a stalwart lot and somewhat more fierce of aspect than were the men of my own clan. The women, too, seemed fuller breasted and more robust. One I noted particularly, a magnificent creature with yellow hair, who was moving about the fire, where stood a big man who seemed in authority and whom I recognized at once. It was old Horsen, chief of the migrating clan, and this was to be one of their stations on the march. I liked not the look of Horsen. I went farther into the forest and made myself a bed of leaves in a thicket, kindling no fire to attract the notice of the wanderers. As for the dangerous wild beast, bear, wolf or lynx, they would not remain in the region of the noisy camp. I slept soundly.

I awoke as day was breaking and, for a time, was undecided what to do, though, certainly, my first object must be to learn from their actions if the invaders thought to encamp by the little bay for any length of time. I crept cautiously to a place near the wide stretch of beach where the trees and bushes were thickest and, peering out from there, saw what convinced me that the band would remain there for some days, probably to renew their supplies by hunting and fishing. They had brought with them a number of light canoes, such as could be easily carried by two men, and, early as it was, I saw fishermen out upon the waters. The rude skin tents erected were pegged down firmly, the people near the morning fires were moving about slowly, while, here and there, were men engaged in examining their bows and other weapons, and consulting together and pointing in different direc-

tions. Apparently they were going on a hunt. I felt assured they would not depart from the region at once.

My plans regarding the hunting of the little sable were surely thwarted, but it seemed to me that it would be a wise thing to lurk about for a time, if I could do so with safety, and so learn more fully what manner of people these were and how their advent on their southward march might possibly affect my clan. We surpassed them in numbers somewhat, but they were fierce of appearance and the men were all well armed. Their bows seemed better than ours, they were longer and heavier, and their spears were many of them made smooth, as I could see when the sun shone on them. These wanderers might be peaceful, but it was well that my clan should be prepared. Our oyster and mussel beds and excellent fishing grounds were prizes worth the taking, and peace between clans was a string of bark at best.

Soon after a great number of the men of the camp — more than half of them — gathered in a body equipped for the hunt, and entered the forest toward the southwest. Evidently they were going to hunt on a large scale, as we sometimes did, extending a line in a great semicircle and bringing in the ends, thus enclosing whatever game might be near us in our front. That they would not hunt save at a long distance from the camp I knew, because the commotion there had driven the game away, and so I felt certain that they would not return until nearly nightfall. Many others of the men were fishing and there remained in the camp only a few of the less active, and the women and children. What a chance, I thought, for a surprise by an enemy!

There was no longer such extreme need for caution in my movements, and so I wandered about through the forest, thinking that I might surprise a grouse or some other bird, to give variety to my supper. I was unsuccessful, and, wearied of the search, at last threw myself upon the ground in a little glade closely surrounded by trees and a thicket and entered only by a narrow pathway made by the creatures of the forest. I was soon asleep, for, necessarily, I had rested but little during the night.

How long I slept I do not know, but I awoke with the feeling that something alive was near me, a faculty common to us people of the shore and woods, who must always be, even unknowingly, exerting our senses for safety's sake. I rose slowly to my feet and stood facing the woman with the yellow hair whom I had seen talking with Horsen the night before! I think we were equally startled, but it was the maiden who spoke first.

"Who are you?" she said.

Her language was like my own, for only one speech was known along the coast, and I understood her readily, and understood, as well, that she was not afraid. I scarcely knew how to answer her. "I am a hunter," I replied, "from a village two days to the south."

"Sit down," she said, "and tell me about it."

So we sat down upon the grass, the pleasant sun shining upon us, and I told her all I thought best of our people and of our way of living. She made no comment for a little time and then said, thoughtfully: "I think it is better than ours."

As I sat there looking at her it came to me that there was none like her in my own clan, none so stately and

brave, as she had shown herself, and, assuredly, none so good to look upon. There were yellow-haired women there, but none with such deeply yellow masses of it ; there were women of excellent form, but none so finely straight and slender, yet full-bosomed and rounded of leg and arm. I could not keep my eyes from her. I wanted her.

We sat there talking long. She had come into the forest seeking the berries which grew in the thickets and so had found me. I told her of my name, Scar, and she in turn told me that her name was Freya, that she was the daughter of the leader, Horsen, and that the encampment was to continue for five days, when the march southward would be taken up again. And more we said. It was wonderful, my great good fortune, but we became friends as those the Something which I do not understand may sometimes make us. She promised that she would not betray my nearness and that she would come to the little glade again at the same time on the morrow.

And the story of what followed in the next three days it seems to me must have been a very old one, for I had seen what was somewhat like it among the lovers of my own clan. We, Freya and I, came to know our hearts and what was within us very well. We knew that if we were apart it would not be as good as if we were together always. She was faithfully daring. On the fourth evening she came to me in her jacket and short skirt of wolf-skin, with her necklace and armlets of bright beads, and carrying her cloak of fur and her bow and quiver of arrows. She could use the bow, she said. We fled together into the forest, and it was when we were perhaps a league from the camp that our first misfortune came. We saw

at not a great distance from us one of the clan returning from the hunt, and he discovered us as well. He seemed to pay little attention, though, perhaps thinking me one of his own band, but we knew that when Freya was missed it would be known that her companion was a stranger, and that there would be swift and fierce pursuit. It could not be known yet where we were going, and the trackers must move slowly. All night we hurried at our utmost speed without the risk of exhaustion and then hid in the depths of a great swamp. We were safe enough for a time, and a full day, we judged, ahead of the certain pursuit. Old Horsen was not one likely to lose a daughter tamely. Yet there came no alarm and, travelling at our best all night and in the day as well, we reached my village in the afternoon. I had been more than doubtful of the manner of my reception when I told of all which had happened, for I had done what might possibly bring the clan into grave trouble did it venture to take up my cause, a most unlikely thing, for a man of the Kitchen-middens did not often fight for love when the love was not his own. We were yet too near the ways of brutes for that.

I need not have been troubled, for the time, at least. The whole village was in a turmoil as we issued from the forest; there was much running and shouting, many boats were on the water, and all excitement was centred upon a huge, dark object which lay among the reefs not a great way from shore and directly in front of the line of huts. I recognized what it was on the moment. It was a great whale stranded, a rare event and a glorious one for the people of the clan. I caught one of the men by the arm and made him tell me how it had come.

A little before noon the people on the beach and those fishing had noted a great commotion of the water quite a distance out at sea, and could not understand it until the foaming and splashing came nearer, for it was approaching the shore rapidly. Then they who had seen the happening often, though never so near the village, recognized what it all meant. A big whale was being attacked by the only enemies he feared in all the ocean, the giant swordfish and the sea fox, as we called it, the thresher, which, with its enormously lengthened body thrown in air, could deliver a blow to crush frightfully into the body of even such a monster as a whale. The attack — for it was no conflict — was a dreadful one, and the victim, in his agony and fear, was heading recklessly and unknowingly directly for the shore. The tide was high, there was a big sea on and, in his senseless and desperate rush, the leviathan came in, on and through the body of a high wave, topped the outer reefs and rocks and pitched floundering among the jagged uprearing mass of rock, a vast prisoner who could not possibly escape. His savage assailants swam up and down outside the reef for a time, as if unwilling to give up their prey, and then took to the deep again, while the whale, deeply wounded, lay gasping where he had been cast until the tide went down, and died there in the shallow water, scarce a hundred yards from land.

The clan had gone half mad with triumph and excitement. Every boat was seized upon, and those who did not possess one swam out, knife or stone axe in teeth, and the body of the whale was attacked by scores upon the side which lay nearest the village. It was a monstrous

and welcome prize and there would be much immediate feasting, for whale meat was a fine thing, and there would be blubber for all. The candles of dried beech splinters stuck into the shell filled with oil would burn merrily in every hut. There would be bone for an hundred uses, and it was no wonder that all were boisterously happy. As for me, I hurried Freya to my own hut and left her there, for it was necessary that we, too, should have our share of the great booty at hand. Time and again I filled my boat with blubber and skin which I cut away from the tremendous carcass, so working until nightfall, when I had a towering mass of it heaped up beside the hut by my helpful Freya, to be better disposed of when the whale had been entirely stripped. We ate, and then the danger which threatened us came sharply to my mind again. I would see old Rolf, chief of the clan, so far as we recognized a chief, and to his hut I straightway went.

Not a man of great strength or courage above others was old Rolf, but he was friendly to me as I have told, and wise in his way and very crafty. I doubted, though, if he would be of much active aid to me in my strait on this occasion. He received my story as I thought he would.

Very grave became the old man's face when I had told him what I had done and what I feared might follow. He thought a little, and, even as he was thus considering there came hurrying to the door of the hut, directed by some of the clan, two runners from the advancing force of Horsen, who demanded that they might talk with him at once.

Very brief was the speech of the runners. Horsen had told them that his daughter had been stolen by one of our clan, and that when his band reached our village on its journey the daughter must be returned and the man who had taken her given over for punishment. Otherwise, the approaching clan would take the man and woman by force.

The action of old Rolf was better and shrewder now than I had hoped for. He knew nothing of the matter, he said. If such a thing had happened, surely the man and woman would be given up, for such stealing of women was a thing prohibited between the clans. He must first know, however, if the outrage had really been done. He would make all inquiries, and would act as was right when the clan of Horsen appeared. Meanwhile, when they came there must be a feast of the two peoples together. The runners went away.

Turning to me then old Rolf made short comment:

“We will not give you up if we can help it; you are too great a hunter and fisherman to lose. But you must hide away in some of the many deep thickets of the marsh to the southwest, near where is the blasted pine upon the little island there. I will send a runner to you to-morrow to tell you of what has happened.”

I bowed my head. Evidently there was nothing else to do. It was, anyhow, better than I had feared. That night Freya and I fled to the distant little island in the marsh. I thought but slightly of it as a refuge.

We took food and warm cloaks with us to the marsh and were not uncomfortable, but I was in fear of our discovery, and much I planned. Then came the promised

runner in the afternoon, a man named Stor, who was my friend. Horsen, he said, had grumbly accepted the invitation to the feast old Rolf had offered, because his people were eager for the whale meat, but a serious thing had happened. I had been betrayed by some enemy and it was known to Horsen that Freya had indeed been taken away by one of our clan, who, as old Rolf explained propitiatingly, had fled in the night to some unknown place and could not be produced. Why, he added, should this be the cause of trouble between the clans? He, himself, with the men of his people, would assist in the hunt for the fugitive and in the rescue of the daughter. Yet this, Stor said, did not satisfy the vengeful Horsen. He had demanded that his men search every hut in our village, which had been consented to readily enough, but which search, of course, had no result. The immediate region round about had been explored as well, with equal barrenness of issue, and Horsen was in a rage. Even to the feast the men of either clan were going armed. After that the country would be scoured and, Stor thought, there could be no escape for us. I knew that he was right. I thought much upon it, and a great plan came to me!

That night Freya and I returned to a place near the village and, making no sound, crept into our own hut at midnight. A storm was brewing, as I had foreseen in the afternoon. I had two boats, one much larger than the other. I crept out in the darkness and found them and brought them together to my hut. Such was the difference in size that I could put the smaller one within the other, and this I did.

Long before day came, when only the fishermen were out, seeking a reef where they seemed to be always most successful at this strange hour, I went boldly down to the beach with the courageous Freya and there we embarked with difficulty in the teeth of the gale which was making the waves roll high. We were seen by some of our people, but they gave no alarm. Well it was for us now that I was a strong rower else we would have never got to sea. We succeeded, though, and later passed the daring group of fishermen who were out already nearly a league from shore and were letting down their lines. As we passed they shouted and, a little later, I saw one of them suddenly put about and begin to row toward the village. I knew my enemy now. It was still dark. I rowed on until the fishermen were lost to sight, and then Freya and I accomplished a feat, for, perched on each end of the larger boat, we managed to get the lesser one out beside us and to enter it despite the turbulence of the waters. The larger boat we cast adrift to tell its story of our seeming drowning. We had done well. I changed my course now and rowed well to the north. I did not wish to be seen again by the fishermen. I laboured in this direction for some time and then, after a struggle to keep the narrow boat well balanced, to avoid swamping in the rough waves, I turned my course directly toward the village. If I could only gain it before the darkness passed! We reached it at last, for I rowed furiously, and were soon beside the whale, on its seaward side. That had been my goal! Lashed in the bottom of the boat were a broad-bladed stone axe, keen of edge, and a long stone knife as sharp. I broke the axe from its fastenings and, while Freya held

the boat against the dead monster's side, I worked as I had never worked before. I cut deeply, in a line up and down and half the height of a man, and cut a parallel line at a distance of a yard from the first one. Next I connected these two cuttings by a similar one at the bottom. From this bottom cutting I worked inward until I could lift the skin a little in a flap, which I could turn upward and then chopped into the flesh with all my might, casting it into the sea as I freed it, where it was gorged in a moment by the hungry awaiting fish. I was making a little cave in the whale.

Furiously I laboured and soon had made a hollow in the flesh large enough to hold two people, a cave having a close-fitting flap for a doorway and invisible to all outside. Into this cave I lifted Freya and the food we had provided. Before I followed her I drove my axe through the bottom of the boat, making a great gap through which the water rushed in and sank the craft as I clambered upward to join my assisting mate. I could recover and mend the boat later if ever safety came to us. We were together in warmth and darkness, relieved of something of our fears. Had ever man and mate such harbourage before?

There came faintly to us, at last, the sound of shouting. I pressed aside a little of the flap and saw a fleet of boats being launched upon the now almost raging waters. They were filled by Horsen's men, confident seemingly of capturing us if we were still alive in our frail cockleshell. There was no place where we might elude their sight, unless, keeping always ahead of them, we could pass the sea to far Lesso, half way across the Kattegat, a feat impossible in such a boat as ours.

We settled down to endure as best we might. From outside faint sounds came to us, and when I ventured cautiously to press the edge of the flap aside into a crack I could hear the tumult of many voices and knew that they were working feverishly upon the whale, but this did not disturb me. I knew that they would work only on the landward side where was shallow water, and knew, too, that they would not reach us for some days. The whale was a huge one.

The first night passed quietly and we slept well. What courage showed my mate! In the early morning I peered forth again and saw the boat I had cast adrift lying stranded on the beach. This was as I had planned. There came no unwonted sound from shore, and I decided that there could have been no battle. And so passed three more days, when suddenly sounds became distinct and very near. Our clansmen had almost reached us. I could feel the flesh behind me quivering, and I had a great idea. I chopped vigorously with my axe into the soft blubber and made a hole finally, and bellowed loudly through it. There was a roar of fright which was followed by flight and silence. Then I made the hole much larger and passed through it with Freya and called aloud to my friends who, it must be said, came back most hesitatingly. They thought us come from the bottom of the sea! Soon, though, they were themselves again and told me the story of all relating to Horsen and his band.

The men in the boats seeking us on the water had rowed hard all day in a rough sea, and one boat had capsized and two of its crew were lost. There had been much risk, and when, at night, the boats returned all felt assured that

Freya and I must have been lost before we had gone a league. There had been a close search of the country, but they had expected to find nothing and were not disappointed in that. They had returned from the search in an ugly mood, and the vengeful Horsen had seemed about ready for battle, but our clan had its own temper aroused by this time and, upon showing their readiness for the fight, outnumbering the men of Horsen as they did, he had thought better of it, and departed sullenly with his following. We should probably never see any of them again, for the shell-beds they sought were far to the south and there were intervening fjords which must be rounded, making their journey a long and arduous one. So we settled down to peace, Freya becoming an accepted and much regarded woman of the clan. We two sought our hut, and I carried to it more of the blubber of the whale because of the light it would supply us. As for the flesh, we would have none of it. Its odour was too persistent in our nostrils.

The long days passed and the winter came, bitter, even for the region, but little did my Freya and I heed the cold in our hut, upon which I had heaped many sods and before the door of which the indrawn shield of skins fitted too closely to admit the chilly winds. We snuggled, like rabbits, there together in our furs, and ate and slept and were almost as sluggish, though most happily, as were the others about us. Often Freya would stroke the long scar upon my face and press her lips against it. We were different in many ways from our companions. Yet, the winter seemed long, though sometimes I would go floundering through the deep snow on the hunt seeking such

game as had not moved southward for the time, and especially the fur-bearers whose pelts now bore their richest covering. Some success I had at this, but I was glad, as was my mate, when the sun shone again more warmly and the snow and ice turned into water. First of all were we to build our fire out in the open.

Warmer and warmer became the days, the snow had gone and there were leaves upon the trees and many flowers upon the ground, of which Freya would twine wreaths in her hair, making her fairer still, if that might be. Then came upon us both a certain longing and a great restlessness, which we could not understand.

It was I, thinking deeply one day while on the hunt, who first recognized the nature of our weariness and discontent. We were not as we should be. So different from the others were we that our lot should not be cast always with them. What should we do? I hastened home to Freya and told her of what was in my mind, and she assented joyously. We would leave the shell-fish eaters!

But what region should we seek, and should we go alone? Not quite all alike were the shell-fish eaters, and I knew of some, especially among the younger men, though some of them were mated, who might be desirous of such adventure. The blood of wandering ancestors was yet in their veins and, in some cases, showed a little of itself despite degeneration. I would talk with these. I did so soon and found some twoscore of the clan who would accompany us gladly, among whom were five women who were mated to five men among them.

We prepared most swiftly for this great adventure, for, now that it was secretly resolved upon, all were most im-

patient. Carrying our weapons and a store of dried meat and fish — though we thought to live easily on the game we met — the band gathered one night at an appointed place in the forest and thence silently took its departure.

In which direction we should go was a subject of grave debate for a time, but it was at last decided that we should press northward to Skagen Rock and thence cross the narrow strait to the mainland in the two light boats we carried. Especially was this determined upon because I had already travelled over much of the way, and Freya knew the course for the remainder of the journey. We were doubtful about the southward way, for we were ignorant of where the land ended there, not knowing that it was but a part of the mainland and would be our shorter course to the regions we were seeking, which were the lands from which our people had once come. Our decision was most unfortunate. How could we know?

As it chanced, though, all came out as we had expected for the first part of our long march. We avoided the shore of the Kattegat lest we stumble upon other clans of shellfish eaters, and reached the Skagen Rock and made the passage to the land beyond in safety. Then we took up the march toward the south.

For days we travelled, finding abundant game and suffering no hardships worth the mentioning. As we progressed the climate became warmer, the trees changed more to oak and beech, and we were more and more rejoiced that we had left the now far distant village where was so little life. Then came some apprehension, when we discovered signs of human beings in the trails we came upon, and we moved more cautiously. We could but

guess what manner of men these might be. There were stories of tribes upon this borderland who were most ferocious and merciless and who spared none of those whom they might at any time overcome.

We were moving slowly along a broad space between dense forests on either side, one afternoon, when there broke out suddenly from all about us such a fierce and hideous yelling as I had never heard, and from the depths of the wood leaped out a dozen times our number of wild gaunt creatures, better armed than we, who did not hesitate or parley, but sent their arrows upon us in a cloud. More than half of us fell beneath that furious volley, and others went down a moment later before the spears and axes. Crazed, I transfixed one of the savages with my spear as they crowded murderously in upon us, and, even as I did so, saw another sink his axe into the head of one of the women with us. They would spare none. As I thought this, in that brief instant, it brought me comfort. Freya was in my mind. I fought desperately, but what of it? A spear entered my body. Of those who had left the shell-bed country not one remained alive!

CHAPTER X

THE LAKE-DWELLERS

LITTLE fingers were fumbling about my face and there came the sound of a prattling voice close beside me. I opened my eyes and looked into the face of a child who was trying to arouse me, tugging valiantly at my hair and chattering away in great delight. Next I heard a laugh and turned upon my couch to see, on the other side of the hut, a woman, brown-haired and blue-eyed, who was looking cheerfully upon the babe and me, pausing only a moment to turn a cake browning before a fire flaming brightly on a broad slab of stone. She was pleasant to look upon, and I lay content, as my drowsiness passed away and my head became more clear.

“You slept deeply,” she said. “The babe was trying to rouse you.”

I looked upon the child again and caught him in my arms and drew him down toward me. He was a sturdy little one and struggled joyously, and my heart went out toward him. The woman laughed again. I now knew who I was, and where it was that I had awakened. The woman was my mate, Elka, and the little child my son. There were none fairer nor finer than these in the village above the waters of the lake which lay between the great forest and the mountains.

I could hear the plashing of the slight waves under-

neath us as they washed against the piles. There was the smell which comes from fish in the depths, and through the open window space in the wall of the dwelling came the fragrant odour of the growing and blooming things of the land. It was very pleasant. I arose and went out upon the platform which jutted forth over the water.

It was a pleasant scene. From where I stood a narrow pathway, made of a series of two hewed planks laid on piles extending well above the water, reached to the sloping shore nearly half an hundred yards away. From thence the slope rose into a green valley which broadened into almost a plain, and there were fenced fields almost as far as I could see, though there were no dwellings. In the fields, though it was yet early morning, I could see men and women moving, and there were animals in some of them as well. On either side of the valley save at the far end rose mountains, not very lofty and covered high up with verdure; but turning and looking over the broad blue lake toward the southeast, I could see great peaks the summits of which were clad in snow, warm as it was in the valley and in the lake village. Further rose peaks still higher, and to the southwest were mountains also snow-clad which the rising sun was turning to a glory of pink and flashing yellow. It was all wonderful and good for the eyes. It seemed to me there could be no fairer place, but I did not linger to gaze long. Little, indeed, I thought upon it, for I was hungry and turned into my cabin that I might eat. What is better than eating?

The meal was all prepared for me, and it was good. There was a fish cooked on the coals and the brown loaf my mate had made, and there were nuts and little apples.

What more could fisherman or hunter ask? I ate, as did my mate, and as she ate she often tucked little mouthfuls into the mouth of the eager babe. We were untroubled, for was not our village at peace, and was not the wild game abundant, and did not the fishing yield, and were not the crops flourishing as were the tamed animals?

Truly we had reason to be glad, for there was not another of the villages of the Lake-Dwellers in all the mountain and valley region as growing and prosperous as ours, nor were there any of the land tribes whom we greatly feared. There had been great trouble and bloodshed long ago, but that was past and known of only in the stories of our fathers. Our ways were now those of the peaceful, though, sometimes, there were tragedies, yet, as the years passed, it seemed as if there could surely be no tribe so safe as we who dwelt in the huts of the lake village. The time when, as I have said, there was no peace at all, was when we dwelt upon the land which came sloping from the west to the water's side and when very near to us to the north and east were wild tribes who made repeated forays and who slew and burned. We had remained but a small and timorous force when some one among us — none now could tell whom, but he must have been most wise and crafty — thought of the plan of making our dwellings on piles above the water, that we might be able to defend ourselves from all invaders, be they any of the wicked foraying tribes, or the marauding beasts, which at that time were many and fierce and dangerous. But this had been long ago, and the story of it was already becoming dim. To make our houses we, first, from our boats, drove sharpened piles of oak, beech, fir or ash, or sometimes yew, deep

into the soft bottom of the lake, not very far from shore, yet far enough for safety's sake; though sometimes nearer shore, so near that, when need came, a platform could be laid from it to the land, there was built a greater house than those we lived in, into which we could drive our animals when any danger threatened them. Our living places we reached mostly by boat, though in times of certain peace we had usually laid from the great platform a narrow path of split planks on a row of piles upon which we might pass more readily; these planks, like those of the slope from the ground to the stables, could easily be taken away. Upon the great platform farthest out in the lake our homes were built, very much alike. There were four upright standards connected by timbers wooden-pinned at the top, making the frame of a house a little longer than it was wide. Between these standards were the walls of interwoven willow plastered with a mortar of firmly adhesive mud. The roof was raised in the middle that the rain might run off more easily. In one end were a door and a window. At one end of the living-room was a big sandstone slab which was the fireplace, the smoke from which escaped through the door and window or through a hole in the roof; it did not annoy us, for all were accustomed to it from childhood, besides which we had learned to use only those woods for fire which burned most cleanly. In the middle of the floor of each house was a trap door, through which could be let down a small net for the fish which were so abundant in the lake and upon which we depended much for food when the hunting chanced to be bad and we had nothing else to eat with our bread of wheat or barley or millet seed, which we

cultivated upon the land. For beds we had the skins of wild animals or of our own tamed cattle, or sheep or goats. What finer homes could be? Surely we were a fortunate people.

We had ways of orderly living. All disputes were decided by three chosen old men of the tribe, though not always would those who quarrelled abide by their decision, and to each man of the tribe was allotted his part in what was to be done for the general good. It must needs be so, for our occupations were so different that it was necessary that each should know how best to do his work. The potter — we had many dishes and huge jars for the grain, and other things of burned clay — could only do his best if always at his own sort of work; those who looked after the cattle and flocks must best know how to handle them and where were the richest and safest feeding places; those who did the hunting and fishing, of whom I was the chief, must be strong of arm and fleet of foot and wise in the habits of all wild things; and those who cultivated the ground — the women and some of the men — must know how to best prepare it for the seeding, digging it up with sharpened sticks, and hauling over it the branches of trees and the drags of stag's horn, and how to do the harvesting. What a community we were! There was none other like us! Long already had our people lived above the lake, our numbers had increased, the huge platform stretched its length far along and became wider as it became longer. Thus safe and thus mingling together in such numbers we devised many new things and so were becoming more capable and potent. What we were some time to be who could foretell?

The work of the hunters was, of needs, the most adventurous and arduous, and only the strong men and those who were most capable were chosen for it. They must be in the forefront in time of conflict with other tribes, should such time come, and we of the band were all provided with coats and leggings of dried aurochs' hide, which arrow or even spear could hardly pierce with force sufficient to enter deeply the body of the wearer. Far and wide we ranged, but not deeply, the dark and almost endless forest region to the north and east, where were dangerous beasts and still more dangerous and savage men of the tribes who had once made frequent war upon us, in the time before we became Lake-Dwellers, and so protected and too well-weaponed and trained and strong for them. In our own village were more than a thousand people, and in other lakes not far to the south and east were almost as many more.

As for my own life in my hut, or outside on land or water, it was but good. There were my mate and the child and the ardour of the chase. It seemed to me at times that I, Scar, the hunter and fisherman, was the most contented man among a contented people.

For food we never lacked, even when the hunting and fishing were not good. There was the grain equally divided throughout the tribe and stored in the great clay jars made by the potters, and the dried meat and fish and also dried fruit of many kinds, for we had the wild apples and wild pears and cherries and plums, and especially a little sour crab-apple which we liked and which grew in great abundance. There were also many berries and great quantities of beechnuts and acorns, in the hills. Much

game there was at times, but, most of all, I think, we depended on the marsh cow, a wild and rather savage little brown beast which came down in numbers to feed upon the marsh grass on the east side of the lake, where we hunted it as craftily as we might. A great adventure had I one day with my brave little mate, whom I had taught to become, oftentimes, a great help to me in my hunting. I had rowed across the lake with her far to the south, for I did not wish to land near the marsh, and so came upon it from the forest beyond. Far out and near the water I could see a single marsh cow feeding close to shore. We slipped quietly from the wood and entered the grass and then crept forward on our bellies as quietly and silently as any of the little creatures living there, and, at last, came very near the cow, for the wind was from it and it did not scent us. It had been a weary crawl.

The cow, very fortunately for us, had in feeding gone out upon a little point extending into the lake. We thus had it at a disadvantage. I rose slowly to my feet and drew my arrow to its head and shot, aiming at the heart and feeling that I could at such short distance drive the shaft almost through the comparatively small brown body. Unfortunately, as I shot, the cow turned a little and the arrow buried itself in her shoulder slantingly. With a great bellow the animal whirled about, and I thought that it would charge, but suddenly it changed its mind and plunged into the water, for the marsh cattle swam almost as easily as did the beaver, of which there were thousands, the skins of which furnished us warm clothing. I leaped forward and shot again as the cow swam, but only put an arrow in its rump. Then there swished by me my

little mate, carrying in her mouth crosswise a short rod she had seized from the ground; she curved forward into the water as gracefully and swiftly as any of the fish-hunting creatures which harboured in the marsh.

Then followed some great swimming! The cow struck out toward the southward, seeking to reach another point of land where it might attain the forest again, but my mate was beside and ahead of it in scarce a moment, belabouring it over the head with the stick she bore, cudgelling it most valiantly and recklessly. The cow, still swimming, and bellowing in rage, turned and charged, but could not catch that elusive thing any more than could the beaver catch the otter. There was a swirl and foam of waters and then came what made me roar aloud as much in wonder as in glee. Elka had seized the marsh cow by the tail and was still cudgelling away most valiantly and recklessly. Furthermore, she was guiding the direction of the swimming beast! As it sought to turn toward the shore, she would thwack it on the shore side so furiously that, in desperation, it would turn the other way. Soon I saw Elka's aim — she was guiding the cow across the lake!

I ran my best until I reached the boat we had left far down the lake, and rowed fiercely toward the two dark objects I could discern now a long distance out. They were moving a little more slowly now, as well they might, but were approaching the farther shore when I came up with them. The cow was showing fatigue, though my mate was even frolicsome, since she had not borne any labour, save in the steering. She had brought her quarry home alive. She guided it to the shore, where I speared

it, ending its trouble, while from the outpouring throng on the wide platform came a roar of astonishment at the exploit. Such a mate had I! Well did she merit the soft furs I always brought her and the necklaces of amber beads for which I traded with the sometimes wandering bands of friendly people from the great sea to the north they called the Baltic, wherein was the amber found. A necklace and an armlet of amber were hers, and she had beads also of serpentine and of the inside of brilliant shells, and many combs of yew-wood and of bone and horn. There were none other like her!

And, most curiously, that same day came another happening of a far different nature and one that made me almost believe that there might be reason for the stone crescent in some of the huts, for surely Yak and Mona without some power to bring good fortune to them would surely have lost their one child, a babe which could scarcely walk.

Most of us could not understand it or believe it, but somehow there had grown up a sort of what they called religion in the tribe, and a belief that we could be helped in our undertakings and preserved from evil by the aid of some great Being in the skies, and this Being was thought by these worshippers to be the kindly moon which gave us light by night, when otherwise we would have been more helpless. So, in the cabins of those who held the faith, was kept as a charm a crescent made of stone which was counted a sure aid and protection. Little faith had I in the belief or the crescent, but, as I have said, what happened on this day somewhat affected me the other way.

The babe was lying in the sunshine in the little fenced-off pen on the platform, of the kind in which the very young children were placed for safety's sake, when it was seen by the great lammergeyer — the lamb-killer — which was hovering in the sky far overhead, and the huge bird dropped down upon it as it would fall upon a lamb in the hills. It came with a roaring swoop, swept upward with the babe in its talons, and sailed away with it above the lake, though flying somewhat lower and more heavily than usual.

Then came the marvel! Fishing far out on the waters was Lars, the best bowman of the tribe, save I, perhaps, but not so far that he did not hear the shrieks of Mona. They could have been heard a long way, those shrieks. And, by the merest chance, from hope of a shot at some water fowl, Lars had his bow with him, lying ready strung by his side and an arrow with it. He seized the bow and stood with arrow poised as the great bird came winging its way directly toward him, the child dangling below. He drew the arrow to the head and, as the bird came nearly over him, he let go the shaft. There was certainly the chance that he might kill the babe, but better such a death than to be torn to pieces by the lammergeyer. Yet the arrow did not touch the child, though it slew the devouring bird, passing fairly through its neck and bringing it down shrieking and fluttering and tossing to the water. Lars lifted out both babe and bird, the child with hardly a scratch upon it, the bird's talons having clutched it where was its thick and protecting little breechclout. It was good to look upon the joy of Mona when she had her babe in her arms again. It was good, also, that Lars

had killed the lammergeyer! Long had it circled in the sky above us, seeking a chance to descend upon and rob us of our lambs. And this was what made it seem to me that, mayhap, there might be something to the stone crescent and the worship of the moon. Surely Yak and Mona had been strangely helped.

Not all the time were we people of the Lake-Dwellers devoted to our labours, because there was no need, and because it was good to play at times and there was the call of man to woman and of woman to man. There was an open space left on the great platform near the centre of all the huts, and there the youth and many of the older ones met nightly for better acquaintance or frolic or merry chatting together. There were certain sports and there was dancing to the sounds of little skin-headed drums and of stretched strings which twanged agreeably. Sometimes there were feasts and festivals as well, when old and young assembled, and then men talked of the catch or the chase or of the tribe's affairs, and the women of what might be in their minds or hearts. There was much proud showing of ornaments — though of none to equal those of my Elka — and there was mating, and it was for the good of all that we had this meeting place.

Yet it must not be said of us Lake-Dwellers that we never had anything to disturb us. The wild regions about us held too much of menace for that. The rude tribes to the east had not threatened us for years now, and with those on the northern sea we were on good terms, but there were others, outlanders and outlaws, whose lurking presence we must guard against at all times. They were bold and cruel and ruthless. It was not safe

for the women to go far afield alone, and our flocks and herds must not be without guardians. Even at the time of which I am telling there had been a recent tragedy.

There had come up a great storm, one such as we rarely had upon the lake, though lesser ones were frequent in our climate. It rose in the afternoon, and continued into the night, the whole lake in a turmoil, and the braced huts on the platform seeming hardly safe from the onrush and pounding of the ravening waters. Toward morning, however, the storm subsided, and the sun shone out brightly, and there rose smoke from all the dwellings, save one, the home of Dill, a good fisherman and one of my own group. There was a call to the inmates of the place, but there came no answer, and the hut was entered to learn the reason for such silence. There lay Dill and all his family, speared in the midst of the storm, slain, as we well knew, by a band of the fierce wanderers. The slain could not be brought to life, but there was something else to do, for Dill had been my close friend and there was a trail which must be followed. I gathered together as many as I could of my group of hunters and fishermen, each wearing his armour of aurochs skin and each carrying his bow and spear and axe and food for many days.

Though there were shrewd trackers among us, at first we could discover no trace of the way in which the murderers had come or gone, because the storm had destroyed all trail; but, circling far, we found it where it became clear with the storm's ending, and then, greatly aided by the dogs we had taken with us, we followed and moved more swiftly and earnestly than ever we had followed game

less tremendous. We were like the wolves which follow the stag, as relentless and as pitiless!

We knew that the outlaws did not much fear pursuit. The task had, heretofore, seemed almost hopeless, because of the craftiness of the bands, to say nothing of their desperate resistance in strongholds of which they knew, or of their many secure hiding-places in the depths of the forest. Now, it was different! One, at least, of these cruel, marauding bands I was resolved should pay the penalty. This band must die!

For a day and a night we followed the freshening trail and, early in the morning, one whom I had sent ahead to creep along more softly than we could together, discovered where they were. They had just risen from sleep and were eating together in a little hollow in the very midst of the dense forest. There were eleven of them, unsuspecting our nearness, if, indeed, they had thought of pursuit at all, talking loudly and planning, it may be, other baneful expeditions. We were twenty to the eleven, and they were ours!

Silently as creeping wild-cats, we encircled the little hollow in which they were eating, and then, with my yell, we leaped upon them. They were as unprepared as they were unsuspecting. They were surrounded and none could escape. It was a time of fierce delight for us. We speared them howlingly, or brained them with our keen-edged stone axes. They were very dead when we left them, first stripping them of their plunder and their own belongings, not, as was first thought, to the wolves, but in another manner. There protruded from a huge tree which stood beside the hollow a straight extending limb

which overhung it and was far above the reach of beasts of prey. With much labour, two men climbed the tree and crept out upon this limb, taking a rope of hide and many shorter ones with them. They let the long rope down to us and we fastened the bodies to it, one after another, and so they were hoisted and hung with the shorter ropes, eleven savage brutes in a row, to dangle long as a warning to other prowlers of what hazard faced those who ventured to invade the region of the Lake-Dwellers!

Yet such grim occurrences as this were rare. We were peaceful and prosperous, as I have told, increasing steadily in numbers. Because there were assembled together so many, all in helpful comradeship with each other, there came a greater knowingness and there was devised much of what was new. The potters made finer jars and all sorts of earthen vessels; the women contrived a way of weaving a sort of cloth from the fibre of plants, though as yet they could not do it very well; the hunters invented new and better snares, the flint chippers made more effective weapons for them; our fields were better tilled, and our little herds were better tended. It was the close companionship in such numbers which led toward our greatness.

And so the full days passed. It was a little after summer and the leaves in the forest were already turning slowly from green to brown or brilliant red or yellow. It was on one of the brightest of the autumn afternoons that I thought to go fishing with hook and line, taking my bow along in the hope that I might find ducks or geese about the marsh, for I had it in mind to fish near the far-

ther shore. It was well that I did so, as far as that day went.

Of all the animals we sought to capture or kill because of the richness or beauty of their fur there was none to equal the otter. An otter skin was deemed a greater prize than that of bear or wolf or lynx or beaver, and he was counted fortunate who owned one. Very few of such skins were ours, however, for so silent and elusive, so wary and crafty, and swift either on or under the water was the otter, that it was hard to trap or kill one of them. Not a fisherman or hunter in the tribe but had hunted them with all his art, and not many had been successful, though there existed and thrived numbers of them, great prizes, in and about the shore. On the afternoon of which I tell I rowed to near where the deep water shallowed into the vast marsh, in which were broad pools connected with the lake by narrow streams of little depth. I was sitting idly and motionless in the boat with my line in the water when, suddenly, two tawny pointed noses followed by dark bodies rose to the surface. I did not move so much as an eyelid. So motionless was I that the creatures did not recognize me as a living object. It seemed to me that I must be trembling visibly in my eagerness and vague hope, but I did not stir.

The otters sported about in the water, chasing each other, diving and racing, and all the time nearing the shore of the marsh and the mouth of one of the little creeks of which I have spoken. At last they were fairly in its shallows and uplifted themselves and looked about them. They waited a moment and then, to my surprise, swam steadily up the winding, narrow stream. I was

astonished because, though these fish-filled pools were among their favourite hunting-grounds at night, they were never seen in them in the dangerous daylight. What had induced these two to take the risk I cannot tell; it may be that they felt well assured of safety after their survey with uplifted necks, their eyes seeking in all directions, or, that they were unusually hungry, but, whatever the cause of their unwonted action, it threw me into wild excitement and gave me stronger hope. I might kill them both! The pond toward which they were swimming was small and shallow, and I could easily guard its entrance. I waited until a turn of the slender stream hid them from sight and then rowed swiftly toward it.

There was a commotion and splashing in the little pond, which I saw was not more than ten or twelve yards across, as I neared it after abandoning my boat and creeping forward through the high marsh grass. The otters were rioting there among the many fish of the smaller kind, perch and the like, which had reached it from the lake and were now at the mercy of their enemies. They were fairly mad in their seizing and gorging. The fish could not escape, and the otters were making a carnival of it. I raised my head by slow degrees and then a knee, moving so invisibly that no change could be seen, and gradually raised my bow with arrow upon string and drew it slowly back. One of the otters, the female it proved, caught a fish close to the shore and, with her forefeet upon the sands, raised her head high as she swallowed it. I held the shaft head fair upon her body just behind the shoulder — I could not miss so near a mark — and let it go. It struck her just where I had aimed and passed through her,

leaving but little of its length in sight above its feathering. She screamed and snarled in her pain and threshed wildly about in the water. I had one of the prizes!

The other otter swam swiftly toward the narrow mouth of the creek, but I leaped into it and barred his way, discharging an arrow at him as his head appeared, but missing him in his lightning-like dart for safety. Round and round he swam in his terror and perplexity, and then darted to shore and made off through the marsh grass toward the lake. I shot at him as he left the water and before he reached the high grass, but struck him only in the ham, where the arrow stuck. Then I rushed wildly after him. An otter can run with no little speed on land, but not so swiftly as a man, and I was up with the fleeing animal in a moment, striking fiercely at him with my bow. In his desperation he faced me snarlingly, even leaping at me in his rage. The bow was useless against him, but I saw a piece of driftwood at my feet and seized upon it and, as he again sought to escape, I passed him once more and, as he faced me, killed him with a single blow upon the head. I carried his body to the shore of the pond and laid it beside that of his mate, which I rescued from the water.

It seemed incredible! I had slain two magnificent otters in a single day. When had such fortune ever before come to a Lake-Dweller? How magnificent was the fur! How carefully and delicately should the skins be tanned. What a glorious robe should my Elka wear! I carried the astonishing spoil to my boat, shouting aloud unreasoningly the while, and rowed with all my might for the great platform and my home.

What a reception I had! How amazed were all the people of the tribe and how proud and happy was my mate. It was the greatest happening in our lives since we had begun living in our hut together. Surely such fortune deserved a celebration! We considered what it should be. It must be a feast, and Nard and Lone, his mate, who were often our companions and who lived in a hut near our own, should share it with us!

We had in the hut the hind quarter of a fallow deer I had lately killed in a manner of which I was proud, for I had killed it in the open. I had seen it from the nearby wood, but at first was hopeless of getting within bowshot of it. Then an idea had come to me which I followed quickly. The animal was standing knee deep in the lush, long grass of the plain, and, seeking another open space not far behind me, I plucked quantities of this grass and bound it all about me with the strings of hide I always carried, the grass concealing even most of my head. Then, crawling upon the ground, I crept into the open and advanced toward the feeding deer. Looking however closely, one must have been sharp of eye to detect me. There was none among the hunters of the tribe who could move as softly and as silently, either afoot or crawling, as could I, and this time I fairly outdid myself. Nearer I came to the deer until I was but a few yards away, and then, as softly and slowly as I had later with the first of the two otters, I rose to my knees and raised my bow and drove the arrow to the very heart of the game. Somewhat did I boast of that among my tribesmen.

The hind quarter of this fat beast should be the meat for our feast, but, on an occasion so great, there must be

other things. We must have fish as well, to go with the wheaten cakes and the wild apples and beechnuts, and I was resolved that it should be one of the great pike which were abundant in the deeper water, but which we rarely caught in the water about the village.

So in the afternoon of the day after the killing of the otters I prepared for the fishing. I was in great spirits. As I neared the edge of the platform where my boat was moored I passed old Fir, the oldest man in the tribe, and a hale old man he was! His face was withered, but his step was quick and firm and he still worked among the potters, one of the best of them. He was always cheerful, delighting in his children and grandchildren and a great-grandchild or two, as well. His presence was an animating thing for us, and we respected him much and listened to his advice, which was never unwise. As I spoke with him and looked upon him, I said to myself that in my old age I would be another like him! Surely I would live to be as old, for I, Scar, was the strongest and most full of health of all our clan, the one most able to fend off evil of any sort. Assuredly I would live as long as had this fine veteran, who was near an hundred years of age.

I took my larger net into my boat and rowed out with it and anchored it with a stone at the end of a rope of skin above a deep place in the lake where I knew the pike were most abundant. I let down the net, which was a pouch-like thing, baited in the centre and which would upon the swift pulling of a cord of hide enclose whatever was close above it. It was lined with many sharp barbed hooks, to assist the chance of capture in the struggles of the fish

to break away. I waited a time for the bait fastened upon the hoop-net to attract the fish, and then lifted the net sharply. It came only a little way; it had somehow caught upon the bottom. I was enraged at the happening. Pull strongly as I dared, I could not release the net. There was but one thing to do: I must dive from the boat and free the thing, no feat for one who could swim like a beaver. The day was very warm; I was impatient and excited; I could dry happily, when I rose, in the sun, and so I dived with my tough garb still upon me. Down to the net I went and learned in a moment what had happened. There was some sort of narrow jagged opening, reaching downward perhaps a yard in the rocky bottom, and into this hole the net had fallen, catching and entangling itself upon the spurlike protuberances which extended from the sides of the little chasm. It appeared to be twisted, and impaled about and upon two of these. I tugged and strained, but my efforts at its dislodgment failed, while my breath was almost exhausted. I must go to the top for air before I could do more. Then, as I made one last desperate attempt before rising, my foot slipped with the effort and I slid downward into the hole and into the anchored net itself! I was suffocating; I strove to swim upward, but was held back; the strong sharp hooks had caught in my clothing in a score of places, at which I plucked with the fierceness of despair. Then I strived to tear away my skin garments, but was already too weak for that. I could endure the strain upon my lungs no longer. I opened my mouth gaspingly, and the water rushed in. I was drowning!

I yet struggled for a moment or two, and then became

quiescent, I know not why. A thousand thoughts came to me. I had heard it said — and the wise ones of the tribe said — that it had been so from the beginning, that to the drowning always comes in an instant the memory of all things of importance which may have happened in his lifetime. It was so with me. How many things I had forgotten! I lived my life over again in what must have been but a moment. Then came the present. I thought of my immediate clan — ill could they afford the loss of Scar, the hunter — I thought of the black sorrow of Elka. I thought of my people and of the time when they would so increase that all men would be lifted, because men had come together in a city — the first the world had ever known! Of things such as these I thought. Then all became dreamy and very pleasant.

CHAPTER XI

THE ARMOURERS

I WAS aroused by the sound of a strange hammering, blows following each other rapidly and with a quality of sound it seemed to me I had never heard before. It was not like that of stone upon wood or of stone upon stone, but had at times a faint ring, a something altogether unfamiliar. I had been sleeping peacefully in the sun, lying in the grass of a plot among bushes which grew in a valley-like gorge between rocky walls and having many boulders scattered about upon its surface. I sprang to my feet and emerged from the bushes to discover the cause of the curious hammering, and recognized the scene, though somewhat slowly. The Hammer was at work with two companions, and I knew that I should have been helping him had I not become tired and gone to the sunny spot in the bushes to rest and sleep a little.

The Hammer — he had gained the name because he was, nowadays, doing little else than swing his big stone hammer in seeking to acquire what had never been much sought before — saw me approaching and hailed me boisterously: “Ho! Did you sleep, Scar, big laggard? Here is more mauling for you.”

There was mauling to be done, assuredly. All three of the men were at work, standing beside a flat boulder upon which they were seeking to pound to little fragments un-

even chunks of rock, which, from their shape, must have been somehow broken from a larger body. As I drew nearer I saw that among the fragments the men were thus seeking to pulverize, there appeared lumps and shreds and strips of a substance which did not break beneath the blows, though it might bend and flatten. Then what remained of the daze of my sleeping went away in a moment and I knew the why and wherefore of what was here before me. The red substance was the thing Hammer had found in the pronged rock and was copper, as we came to call it, something now most precious to us and in the getting of which we were all assisting Hammer to the utmost. What arrow-heads and spear-heads he had given us! There had been never others to equal them.

It had been a curious discovery and one unlikely to have been made by other than this Hammer, friend and hut-mate of mine, and the shrewdest and most thinking man among us. He, who was ever alert to discover the reason of what was unusual, was attracted one day by the appearance of a particular boulder in the valley. It was different from the others in that it had upon it many outstanding points and bulges, as if the stone were harder in those spots and had yielded less to the chippings of the cold, heat and storms or whatever might make it grow smaller with time. He picked a small rock from the ground and struck a heavy blow upon one slender projection, longer than his hand, thinking to break it off, but it did not break; it only bent instead. Then, indeed, was the curiosity of Hammer aroused mightily. He would have that strange projection! Fiercely and strenuously he pounded upon it, and very wearily, at last, for he had set

himself a serious task, though he finally succeeded in loosening the prong from the rock after long battering of it back and forth. He held in his hand something well worthy of his study.

Hammer brought to our hut the red piece, which surely was not of the rock itself, and much we considered of what it might be and of what use it could be made to us. That last thought took but little time. Hammer decided it:

"It will not break," he said; "it will only bend, and that not easily, yet it may be hammered into many shapes. Such hammering it shall have. I will make a spear-head such as men have never seen!" He took the fragment of metal and one of the heaviest of our stone hammers and went with them to the hard flat boulder in the ravine and there began his pounding.

All that afternoon came to our ears in the village the sound of the hammering at the rock. I did not go there, for I had other things to do out in the lower hills where I had seen a group of little deer, and where I thought I might get a chance at one as they came from the wood at sundown. I got none, and darkness had come when I reached our hut again and found Hammer by the fire, whereon he had roasted meat, which tasted good to both of us. I asked concerning his labour, and he showed me the piece of copper.

What a change had come to it! Very nearly in the shape of a spear-head it was now, and fine to look upon in its bright redness. Hammer said he had not sought to do more when the light began to fail, for the work must be finer now and he must use a lighter hammer. He was

at the rock again in the early morning and wrought all day again, meanwhile having lying on the rock beside him as he worked the best and most beautifully shaped stone spear-head that we owned, one of the hardest flint, most perfect in its form and so polished by rubbing upon sandstone and afterward with the bark of trees that it was as smooth as the shell of a beechnut. This Hammer used as a model, and the "tap-tapping" of his light hammer of stone upon the metal was like the tapping of a woodpecker who never wearied. He would not show me that night what he had accomplished, but said that his task would be done in the day to come. At night when we met again in the hut he showed me the copper spear-head.

It was something wonderful, that spear-head. It was smoother than any stone one ever made, for Hammer had tapped so gently, at the end, that there was left no trace of indentation, and afterward he had polished it until now it glittered in the firelight. Its edge was better than could be given to any stone knife, and, Hammer told me, it could be ground upon our sandstone whetstones, or if it became dulled, could be easily hammered into sharpness again. It could not be broken! There was no other such spear-head in the world — and we could make others like it!

There was such excitement in the village as had not often been known before when Hammer, who had set the spear-head in its shaft, displayed it to the tribe. There was wonder and great envy and desire and a demand that henceforth Hammer should do naught else but make such spear-heads, that each might possess one and so the tribe be made superior to all about us. And Hammer

promised this, if only they would bring to him the copper with which to work, and he told of how he had found that which he had. This was agreed upon, and soon as many men as could work together were assailing the copper-holding boulder with their heaviest hammers and mauls of stone. A weary task must it be to break that rock to pieces, but the hammers were of a harder stone than it, and all day the blows were falling and in time each scrap of copper which it held must needs be in our possession.

And, as it had been agreed upon, so it came to pass, though long was the labour. Strips and bits and fragments of copper of all sizes, from those fitted for arrow-heads and spear-heads up to those large enough for axes, were gained from the gradually crushed rock, and Hammer, whom I now aided, laboured from dawn until night. The time came when each man in the tribe bore proudly a shining copper spear-head and when some had axes or copper arrow-heads as well. It was a great thing, but the rock was gone! Where could we get more copper? There was none to answer, and upon this problem Hammer and I thought much and discussed it many times.

The matter, as well it might, had become one meaning much to all of us. We were not a tribe at all mighty as to numbers, but here had come to us what, were it to continue, would lift us above all others, for we would have the best of weapons and, furthermore, that which would enable us to get by barter whatever others had which we most desired. What allies we could make! No little thing in those days was such alliance, when warfare for spoil alone was not uncommon and none of the weak was

safe without a strong alliance. And what other good might come to a tribe with such a possession held by itself alone! All saw the need we had — a puny force, an offshoot from a greater one which long since had moved to the western forests and of whom we had lost all trace. Less than half a thousand of us were in the village, and, though we were most prosperous and content, we knew not what might come. Far up toward the north and west of the new land we were, and in a region of scattered forests and bright rivers and wild vines and nuts and fruits. There was a stream behind the village; there was an abundance of game; the women tilled a little, giving us a store of wheat and barley; we had sturgeon from the not far distant greater river to which we made expeditions at times, and there were the little half-wild horses to give us food in any strait. The winters were not severe, though the snow fell deeply and sometimes the famished wolves were out, but all the rest of the year was beautiful and bountiful to us. Nomads, mere wanderers, our forefathers may have been, but upon us had come at last something of the home-clinging way. What better place to guard and, if need be, fight for? So it came that we were glad of whatever might make us greater and stronger, and we were proud and glad of what had come from the copper rock, and disquieted because we knew not where to find another like it.

Long, one night, were Hammer and I debating in our hut concerning what had become the common problem. To both of us it seemed that there must be more than a single rock in all the world which held that which we wanted.

“And it is not distant,” said Hammer, “this other rock of the same kind; there may be a host of rocks.” Then he spoke still more earnestly. “We, even you and I, are the ones. We must seek more copper and we shall find it. It lies somewhere in the gorges, surely! Will you come with me until we have gone far enough and searched most closely? What greater thing could we be doing? Will you come with me?”

As he well knew, he need not have asked the question. I had long since become as earnest as was he in the great thing upon which so depended our fortunes and the fortunes of all our tribe. Surely I consented, for I had lost myself in the fancy for this wonderful new adventure of search and labour which might assure us weapons and many other things of a different and better sort, and give to us of the plains and hills an advantage over all other tribes. I had become a joyous copper-seeker and earnest artisan! My fortunes should be henceforth joined with those of Hammer, as he would have it, and as it was now pledged. What if we should somewhere find the red substance in abundance and perhaps not so firmly imbedded in such rock! What things would happen then! Utterly abandoned were we now in this quest to come. What cared we for the women or the breaking of the horses or the wild chase of the stag or urus? A greater thing was ours! Soon were we prepared for the journey, the course of which we had not yet determined, except that it must follow the base of the low mountain range and lead up its many valleys and gorges and canyons until, if fortune were with us, we had come upon what we sought.

Straight descendants of the first Tamers were we, so

our legends said, and there were horses with us, though many other tribes had not yet learned to tame and use them, or sometimes count upon them for meat. Should we take horses? It was finally decided between us that we should, since with the region close about us we were of course well acquainted, and searching would be wasted in it, and it would be a day's journey afoot along the base of the range, which trended to the southwest, before we could reach the place where began the succession of upward extending ravines in which we hoped to find more of the red metal. We hoped this, not from any definite belief, but because so many of these openings resembled the one in which Hammer had made the first discovery. After we had reached the first of these we could turn our horses loose, knowing that they would find their way back to the village.

We caught our rough little steeds, small, hairy and shaggy, but sinewy and enduring, and, with ropes of hide about our shoulders, fastened to us the heavy hammers we hoped to need, and, after the usual struggle with the animals, got fairly on our way. A half day's ride brought us to the first ravine, and then we took off the rawhide halters, which were our only bridles, and let the horses go. They started back whinnying and galloping. The horse of the time took most unkindly to the carrying of any burden. He was to learn much concerning that matter very soon.

Two of the openings of the hills we explored most thoroughly that day. They were not at a great distance from each other and were very much alike — narrow gorges or ravines with narrow bottoms and almost perpendicular

sides. We found nothing to even remind us of the sort of rock in which Hammer had discovered copper in the first place. We took up our march again and, just at nightfall, came to an opening, not so narrow and gloomy in appearance as the others. This we would explore in the morning, and so we lay down for the night before a little fire we had built. It was early autumn and was not cold.

The old men in the tribe do not all have the same thoughts as to dreams, the things which come in the night when one is sleeping and make him think he is alive at some other place, or, at least, seeing and doing other things than those which are. Those whom I think are the most sensible say that dreams are as nothing, but others say that they mean much and may speak of the past or even foretell what is to come. I know nothing of it, but I know that I dreamed much as I lay beside the fire that night, and that I thought myself, first, in a land of lakes and strange abodes supported above the water, and that, later, I was again searching with Hammer for the rocks with the red metal in them. I dreamed, too, that we came to a small round mountain that was made up altogether of copper, and that all around it was more of the copper made into spears and arrow-heads and knives and axes and all manner of other things we needed in our huts. It was a very foolish dream, but it made me pleased when I woke in the night, though, as I have said, I had no faith in such things.

It was a wonderfully shining morning which came to us and, as we ate, I still kept my high spirits from the dream and was so filled with cheer and made such bouy-

ant talk that Hammer said I must have arisen early and gone into the forest and eaten of a root which, it was said, would make men laugh. I cared not. I was most courageous and full of lightness. I felt that the Things, the makers of happenings, in which we believed a little, though heeding little as well, were going to smile upon us some time that day. Of this I spoke afterward to Hammer many times.

We started up the opening in the hills, and the prospect was fairer than we had seen yet. It was not a gorge, but wide enough to be almost like a narrow ascending valley, and its sides were not perpendicular, but sloping and bearing many stunted oaks and pines, and shrubbery, as did the bottom. Over the bottom were distributed boulders of all sizes, and some of them appeared certainly not to have come from the mountainsides adjoining, so different were they in appearance from the rock of the sloping walls. Such a thing I had often seen, however, and I thought little of it. Hardly had we entered the gap than we began testing the rocks with our heavy hammers, battering away at them until the moss and incrustations of any kind were knocked away and the nature of the rocks made clear to us. Our hammers, which I have not yet described, were most excellent for this. They were of much weight and of the hardest kind of stones of proper size that we could find in our region. These stones, half as large as a man's head, we had grooved around, after much labour in the chipping, and, fitting in the grooves and holding firmly, had laid withes of the toughest willow, which were twisted into handles of the length we wanted. So we made hammers which would crush

the common rock most easily. Never were better hammers than these of the hard, unbreaking porphyry and greenstone, though these were not the names we called them, if, indeed, we gave them names at all. It was sufficient that they served our purpose well. So we hammered our way up the slope, but found nothing to reward us. At midday we rested for a time and ate, and then took up our testing again, not far from each other, with Hammer, as it chanced, a little in the lead. We had not gone half a furlong when there came from him the longest, loudest and most ear-splitting yell I had ever heard. I was with him in a moment.

Hammer was standing beside a rock of about the height of his shoulder. It was, in a general way, not unlike the rocks through which we had passed, but it had the difference that it was not altogether smooth of surface and that here and there upon it obtruded lumps and points. One of these points Hammer had smitten in his testing and now it glittered in the sun, a spike of purest copper! There could be no mistake about it. We had found what we were seeking. In that one rock, could we but in any way break it apart, were hundreds of the new and amazing weapons which were such prizes. We attacked the most obtruding and slender and most promising of the outstanding parts with our great hammers, working most feverishly until we sweated like the wild boar at the end of the long hunt. I won in the race, and very proud I was. The spikelike mass upon which I hammered, beating it back and forth and this way and that, parted at last from the mass and fell to the ground only a moment before that upon which Hammer had been spending his mighty blows.

We had what would make a spear-head apiece, enough in themselves to have made our journey worth while!

All day we laboured, beating off some half-score of the red protuberances, and then, to breathe ourselves, went farther up the somewhat narrowing valley to learn whether or not there were other rocks of the kind which meant so much to us. One other we found, to our great delight, but one only, though we followed the defile until it lost itself in what was little more than a crevice in the now close looming mountainside.

We resolved that for two days we would labour on the rocks and that then we would return to the village, where Hammer would work upon the copper we had gained, and I would return with others to do what we could with further hammering of the two rocks and make, perhaps, some further search. That plan we did not carry out. It was about the middle of the afternoon of the first of these two days when I heard from the forest of beech and oak which lay at the foot of the slope the call of the grouse — doubtless feeding on the many nuts. We had, in our excitement and absorption, been eating only of the dried food we had brought with us, and my stomach clamoured for roasted grouse as soon as the cries of the birds reached me. It affected Hammer as it did me, and I took my bow and arrows from where they were left at our sleeping place and crept into the forest. There were grouse in abundance there and soon I had a pair big enough and fat enough to satisfy even such labourers as we with a supper worth the eating. I had gone well into the wood in my hunting, and now strode swiftly toward the gap, paying little attention to what was about me. So care-

lessly did I walk that I stumbled sharply against a small rock which lay half hidden beneath the brown leaves which were beginning to fall thickly. I glanced downward at the obstacle, which was a flattish stone not a quarter of a yard across, and, I know not why, save that I was at this time curious about all rocks, stooped and turned it over. Its bottom, clean upon the sand, was red! It was copper! Then went out from me a yell which could by no means have been less mighty than was that of Hammer when he had found the rich rock in the defile. He could have heard me from anywhere. His answering shout came back, and soon he was with me looking upon what I had discovered. We stood there silently for a moment and then involuntarily looked about us. Among the beech leaves on every side lay smaller or greater rocks of similar kind. We turned some of them over. They were copper, seemingly almost pure and not so great of size that they could not be beaten apart. Then, it seems to me, that for a time we lost our senses. We shouted to each other without meaning and capered about like wolves in the moonlight. We could not but know that a new thing, one of the greatest ever known, had come to men, and that we and our tribe would be the first to own it in abundance. No longer at this time would we trifle with the two rocks in the valley!

Long we talked that night beside our fire, glorying in our good fortune and wondering, too, not a little, how it could be that copper should exist in such a form. Much we speculated and suggested of this strange thing which had brought such fortune to us. Hammer thought it possible that the red metal was something which grew of

itself where there were the things in the earth and water which gave such growth, whatever it was it needed for its formation and sustenance, but in this I could not agree with him. I could not believe that anything that was hard as rock and did not change its shape as the trees and plants did, could really grow of itself. I believed that all solid things must have been so always and that, if they were found out of what seemed to have been their place, they must have been moved by something else, it might be by men — though that could hardly be so with huge rocks — or by great floods, or, it might be, by the ice, which, in ages gone, had crept down from the far north and pushed many things before it. No one could tell. Perhaps the copper had not moved far at most. It might have come down from the mountains. We ended the talk as vain; it was sufficient that we had found what we sought. We had much to do on the morrow.

At daylight we took up our journey for the village, carrying with us only what we had beaten from the rocks, and one of the smallest of the fragments we had found among the beeches and oaks. Henceforth our work with copper was to be in a different way. We had reasoned upon it and had decided what we would do. At first it had seemed wise to move our belongings to where the metal lay to our hand, but there were other things to be considered.

The mouth of the wide ravine where Hammer had found the first red-pronged rock, near a blasted and hollow tree trunk, faced the village squarely, and, fortunately for him, there also stood near an almost square boulder of the hardest stone, of about half its height, which served

him as an anvil. Such another rock it would be hard to find in a convenient locality, and we had seen none like it in the beech wood or in the ravine of the two rocks on which we had been working. It would cost labour to transport the metal from the wood to the village, but, once it was there, it would be where we could most easily convert it into weapons. We would be near the village and all its conveniences, and, besides, we would be where those would come who wished to barter, as we knew they must in time. Little traffic had there been between the tribes, however friendly they might be, at any time, for the things possessed were very much alike and, besides, the bartering was something new. Our ancestors did not barter. They took what they wanted or, if not strong enough, must go without it. Relations had changed, and now men were engaged in fighting each other only part of the time. Now a new reason for trade had come, and we felt its importance and its promise. So it was resolved between us that the forging should be done in the ravine facing the village, and the copper brought from where we had found it in the wood. We could use our little horses.

It is hard to tell how great was the excitement in the village when we showed what we had with us, and the news of our discovery went about.

Excellent and very curious was the story of our tribe from that same day. There began a new life, for we had another interest now than mere living upon what the earth and land and water might give us for the eating or the wearing. Surely never before did a tribe of men so change in character, because never before had arisen

conditions so splendidly compelling. I devised double pouches from the skins we had, one to hang on each side of a horse, and the youth of the tribe were set at work bringing the copper rocks from the distant forest, while men there toiled to break the larger ones to fragments suited for such carrying. There was a procession of boys and horses between the village and the treasure ground, and soon there arose a small mountain of the copper rocks beside the stone anvil near the great tree trunk, and the sound of hammering never ceased. I worked with Hammer at the shaping, as did two other men, and it was not long, since the anvil rock would accommodate but four workers, before we had rolled down from farther up the valley four or five more of the hard rocks to also serve as they might for other anvils, though to accomplish this required many men as did the later hard work in chipping the tops of the new rocks down to the proper level. Then still more of the men were set to work to learn the way of the hammering and shaping, and became expert according to their gifts, though none could ever hope to equal the way of Hammer. How he rejoiced in his own skill! There appeared nothing he could not fashion from the glittering copper brought to him. With mighty blows at first he would beat the metal more nearly into the shape desired than could any other of us while wielding the heaviest hammers, and then, such crude shape gained, it was marvellous to watch him. He played with the thing as if he loved it. The sound of his beating, as he changed from each hammer to a lighter one in his fashioning, was like the slope from hand to finger tip, until the gentle "tap-tap" could be scarcely heard and be-

neath his hand lay, finally, such perfect weapon or utensil as had never been before. Once, in sheer bravado it may be, he devised and made a brooch so delicate and fine and beautiful that all stood wondering, and there came dark looks and jealousies among both men and women, but he gave the splendid bauble to the most aged of the women, saying that old women had once been young, and so the faces brightened. Very wise was Hammer in his way, and both he and I were above the woman hunger. As for the lucky beldame, she was the proudest among us all and would surely die most unwillingly, since, now, the world was so good!

We went together, Hammer and I, and more thoroughly explored the forest and found that the "float" there, as we had called it, would last perhaps a lifetime at the rate we were using it, and found also that there were many of the copper boulders in the ravines and glens farther along the mountainsides than we had explored at first. This discovery it was which caused me to have a new belief as to whence the copper had come. One of the heights of the range had once been a fire mountain, as was easy to see from where its vomitings had run down the valleys, and was it not possible that the copper had thus been tossed up from the very bowels of the earth? This I thought must be true, and Hammer agreed with me regarding the thing. So concerning that we gave no further thought. It came at last that those working in and about the forest built themselves huts there and that another village arose, though not a large one, and it came, too, that others built huts along what was now become a beaten highway such as never had been seen, and so we

were for a time a long and straggling community. Then came another change and a most potent one.

Some leagues to the north of us was a village of a strong tribe with whom we had always been on close and pleasant terms, for they were of our own blood and so we understood each other well. Thus it chanced that they were the first to barter with us for our excellent copper weapons and that there was much commingling of the people and, as a consequence, from that man-woman happening which always seems to come when the youth of each kind are brought much together, the young men and women of each tribe began taking each other for mates and so the commingling became still closer and better. Then followed what was most wise. There was held a council of the chief men of each tribe, in which Hammer and I had much to say, and it was decided that the two should join and that the formidable tribe thus made should build its village upon the copper fields. There were shelter and water and streams, and game and fish, and it was a fine village site in every way. And thus it came. Barriers were built that we might defy all enemies. Not a man or youth but had keen copper-headed spear and arrows and knife and axe and was trained in the sharpening and care of them. We were bravely weaponed. Not always, though, did we use the copper arrows, for they were too precious to be shot lightly in the hunting, those made of stone still serving for the killing of the smaller game. Then followed a small thing which proved in the end a great one: a youth of the tribe, that he might not easily lose his copper arrows, had tied the scarlet feather of a bird to each arrow shaft close to its end in a little groove,

that it might not hit the bow and mar his shooting. The brilliant feather would reveal the arrow wherever it might chance to fall, which was a good thing. But more came of it. The youth soon learned that an arrow flew more smoothly and evenly and that with it thus feathered he was far surer of his game. This was counted a curious thing, and some held that the red colour made a spell or charm and so guided the arrow rightly, but with the trying of other feathers of any colour, even those from the drab geese, it was found that they served as well. The gray goose shaft sufficed. It was most curious, but it was a potent thing, and soon all arrows were thus feathered and the tribe became the greatest of all archers. Bad would it be for any foeman who might attack us. Much I thought upon this thing and of how always it seemed that one discovery was followed in its needs and new calls by another.

There happened about this time another thing most interesting to us all and fine in its results, following what was conceived by Hammer. He had long looked enviously upon the smaller boulder of the two we had found in the canyon, because it seemed so full of copper of the finest quality, though we paid no attention to it since we had such an abundance of the "float" about us. He would not be denied, though I made much sport of him.

Hammer caused a pit to be dug close beside the boulder and a little deeper than its height, and the bottom of this he had filled with the dryest of wood. Then he brought to the pit's side a veritable mountain of wood as dry, and was ready for the test. The strong men of the tribe were summoned and there was a great upheaval of the rock

with levers, and it was tumbled down upon its bed of wood, which was promptly fired. As the flames rose other wood was heaped upon the rock until it was hidden from view, and so, night and day, was the great hot fire continued, men bringing more fuel all the time and working by watches to keep at reddest heat the bed of coals in the midst of which the rock lay. None cared to approach very near that astounding fire. It was on the fourth night that the climax came, and well it was for the firemen at the time that they were resting behind a boulder at a little distance from the flames, for there came an explosion which fairly lifted the village from its sleep and sent that copper rock in fragments in all directions. Great was the reward of the experiment, and it was good that we should thus learn what fire could do.

And ever our bartering increased with the tribes on every side. Those distant purchased the new weapons and those still farther away saw and must have them, until our community became the most prosperous, as it was becoming the most numerous, in all that far-extending country of plain and hill and forest. There came even some from that huge illimitable forest to the south, peopled by the tall strong men who had come from the far East even as had come our own people, though at some different time, albeit with these our trading was but a little, for they were fierce and dangerous and we cared not much for their close acquaintance, despite our growing strength. As for Hammer and me, we were growing older and less inclined to risk or venture. Yet there was no abatement in our constant thought of all that might be done with the red copper. There followed a time when

Hammer spoke less often and seemed lost in some new thought. One day he told me of it.

"If," he said, "we could only melt and mould the copper!" And he said also, "You and I will go to the village and work there a while and try to do certain things." So I went with him.

The flat rock which had been our anvil was in its place, and sound as ever, seemingly, stood the hollow tree trunk near it, and I saw that it was at this trunk with the hollow opening at its bottom that Hammer looked first and examined most carefully. In the times of our working here I had noticed one thing about this opening at the base of the trunk — that, especially when the wind blew up the valley, it roared and whistled up the trunk through the opening and even drew curvingly the flames of any fire which chanced to be made near it. Could it be this, I thought, that was now in the mind of Hammer? I was not mistaken.

He called to the men in the village and bade them bring from the banks of the stream behind the village a great quantity of the soft tenacious clay such as we used in making our pottery, at which work both men and women among us were most skilful, and this clay he spread upon the earth in and before the opening, thus making a clay platform. He also plastered the inside of the trunk upward as far as he could reach, with this same clay; then upon the clay platform he made a fire, not too high, and fed this fire until nightfall, and for some time later. Then we slept, for we were older men now and cared not to work into the night.

The clay floor and the clay above it were well baked

when we came to the tree in the morning, though not yet enough, Hammer said, yet he did not at once rebuild the fire, but sent for a slender and knowing lad of the village to whom he gave a task of merit. The youth was to wriggle his slim body through the opening and ascend and plaster the trunk inside from bottom to top! It was a feat, but the youngster was equal to it, with the aid provided him. The men cut down a tree and from it took a long slender limb equal to the height of the dead trunk, and sheared off its twigs and many side branches, leaving always enough of each to make a foothold. They climbed the trunk and drew up the limb and let it down inside and thus provided the boy with a sort of ladder from which to do his work. The clay was passed up to him at first and later slung down to him from the top in a skin pouch which one of the men drew up. Two days it required for the resolute lad to complete the work well, but at its end he had bestowed upon him such spear-head and arrows and knife and hatchet of glittering copper as made him mightiest of small warriors and loftiest of men among a thousand. Then in the clay-bottomed and lined old tree trunk a mighty fire was built by Hammer and kept going until the clay was turned to brick. He had made a furnace! The fire roared up the opening as if drawn by all the demons of the sky in time of storm.

Now Hammer took a lump of the clay and, working very carefully, pressed down into it, to half its thickness, a copper axe; upon this he laid a part, exceedingly thin, of the bladder of a stag, and afterward he pressed down more of the clay, so that the axe was all embedded save a portion of its handle; he then left the mess to dry for a time

in the sun, and later heated it for a long time in a fire outside. When he drew it forth and it had cooled, the wooden handle outside the clay was burned away, and, by a little careful prying, the two halves of the mould which had been separated by the bladder came apart. These he fitted together again and enclosed in another mass of clay, leaving open only the opening into the hollow mould. The clay was set upon the ground, with the hole upward.

Next Hammer brought from the village a covered earthen pot, not very deep, into one side of which he made a hole to receive the end of a long handle of wood, though before he put the handle in he covered it also with clay which he baked about it in a long fire. He had now a vessel which he could thrust unharmed into even such a dreadful furnace as he had made within the base of the tree. Into it he placed half a dozen ingots of the purest copper and thrust it, with its lid on, into the white-red heart of the flaming coals. The long handle was propped into place upon a crotch near the flames, and then we fed the fire, and waited!

The day passed into the night, one of us awake at all times and feeding the raging furnace as it needed. Morning came, and then Hammer, who had been sleeping last, arose and looked at me and beckoned. Together we neared the white-hot mass of coals and embers and, taking hold of the long handle very carefully, withdrew the pot from where it rested in the eye-blistering furnace. We took it away from the fire and rested it a moment on the ground, while, with a long stick in hand, Hammer lifted off the still red cover. Then rose such a yell of triumph as had not been heard since we found the copper in the

forest. The metal had melted! We did not speak. Carefully as men had ever performed an action, and holding the ungainly handle firmly, we poured the molten stuff into the hole in the awaiting mold. It filled and overflowed and ran upon the ground, but we cared not. What was left we poured into a hollow in the soil and then threw ourselves upon the ground to wait again. It was noon when we broke away the clay, and later, when the mould had cooled enough to be handled, the two parts separated easily and there came forth a copper axe! The great thing was accomplished! It was not a perfect axe, but it would be so after a little grinding and polishing. Henceforth the making of copper things would be done in a new and easier way. Furthermore, one man, two men indeed, would die something more content. The tribe — the whole world — had a part in what had come that day!

And now for a time there were life and labour and clamour in the old village again, because of the tree furnace and the convenient clay, but later we learned to build a better furnace and to provide at the forest village all things required for easier casting. With the training to the labour from the getting of the copper to the time when it was made into weapons or other things, there came, too, a new orderliness and sense of what was best among us, and we established what was something like a government; in a council of the older men, and less like the ways of the barbarian, we sometimes met who had no law save that of might. We feared them not, though once the ever-dreaded westward drift from we know not where brought to our doors a small horde of barbarians who

thought to overrun us easily, but who fell in windrows at our barricades before such archery as ours, or died beneath our copper spears and axes and fled, a remnant, to seek somewhere an easier conquest. There were not too many left for such adventure, and the tribe next to us, a strong and warlike one, received them fiercely and finished them completely.

But Hammer and I were growing old now and, to me especially, came a weakness which I could not overcome. I was sick long and was well tended, though it did not avail, I know not why, for I had but little pain and still helped to advise, as was my duty as one of the elder council, and still felt every interest in the welfare of my prosperous tribe. Prosperous indeed it was, for now we and what we possessed were known to all. From far and wide came the riches of the time to us — many things — deep furs from the north, amber from the western sea, and a host of other things of worth. And, as the barter grew, so did a greater acquaintance between the tribes of all the land, and all learned much and came to understand each other better and what was beyond the region of each. All this because of our great discovery and of what we had done with it!

And might there not yet, I dreamed, be hidden in the rocks other and even more useful metals which men would sometimes find and smelt? These thoughts pleased me much in the days when I lay helpless and weakening from day to day, and much I spoke of them in the times when Hammer sat beside me after bringing such food as I could eat. But it was not for long!

CHAPTER XII

THE SAILORS

I HAD been sleeping, pleasantly enough, though dreaming of a noisy clanging of hammers in a forest. I awoke to find myself stretched lazily upon the sand, to hear the lapping of waves and look out upon blue waters to the westward, it must be, for it seemed afternoon and the sun was not far above the waters, a little to the left as I faced it. I rose to my feet and looked toward the east and there saw a host of palm trees, beyond them green hills, and beyond these, mountains. From the beach the land lay level to the hills and, not far from the shore and among the palm trees, were many huts with people moving about among them. Near where I had been lying were a number of boats hauled out upon the sand, which boats I studied curiously. They did not seem unknown to me, but I was still half-sleeping, for the sea and the air and the day were drowsy, and the leaves upon the palm trees were idle.

Not from the trunk of some great tree had any one of these boats been hewn and hollowed. They were made in quite another manner, with a framework, and keel and ribs of heavy wood, and a sheathing, with the seams made water-tight by caulking, and carried oars instead of paddles. Very good boats they seemed to me, and fit for riding rough water, and, as my sleep-clogged senses

cleared, I knew, for had I not helped to build them? Most excellent boats they were, and I could see still larger and finer ones drawn to the beach at a greater distance from me, and others riding the waters of the fair harbour made by the semicircling curve of land. From where the larger boats were hauled up to the shore there came a shout:

“Haste thee, Scar; we go out for the fishing!”

I hurried toward the boat, for I knew what was my present duty since there were but six of us to man the boat, which made but a scanty crew. We were not to row far, however, only to a place nearby the islands where the fishing was most promising, so that all the oarsmen usual were not needed. My companions were already in their places when I reached them, and lightly chided me for my delay. I took my seat upon the rowing bench and grasped an oar and soon we were sweeping toward a passage between the islands. There were in all the world no better seamen than we of the Phœnicia which had begun to live fairly with the founding of our village, Akko.

We were not great people as compared with these who were behind the mountains of Lebanon, which protected us on the east — there were as yet but some five thousand of us to occupy the narrow land between the mountains and the sea — but we had prospered greatly since venturing from the home of our forefathers, where the great Euphrates finds the southern ocean. It was well for us that we had found this palm and wild vine-clad country, rock-walled and safe as might be from invasion, and had taken up our abode here, and sent to our kindred telling them of the soil's richness and of the many spoils of the

sea, and so they were following us, band after band, forming new villages to the north along the coast. Of these were Sidon and Tyre, though as yet they were but hamlets. As for us in Akko, we could ask no better fortune than was already ours. We were possessors of only this close-bounded and curtailed domain — but what a land! Never was one fairer or richer or better suited to the needs of such as we. The palms which grew in forests along the sea-lapped sand and wide beaches supplied abundant timber for our houses, while for our ships! — already our great biremes were becoming stately — there were the cedars of Lebanon thick upon the range behind us, and oak and other woods of strength. Back of the sandy coast belt was the fertile plain, yet to become a region of gardens and orchards and cornfields, a land for the pomegranate and the orange. Still further back rose the green, low-lying hills, great slopes whereon would grow most healthily the vine, the olive and the mulberry, all of which we cultivated zealously, and then, as the hills rose into mountains, came the ruder spaces clothed here and there with forests of oaks, chestnut, sycamore and terebinth, and, best of all, the mighty cedars, of which I have already told. There were harbours at points along the coast, made naturally by the many small islands which formed a barrier against the incoming sea. We were settled in a land of abundance and one also of safety and security, for from the mountains at the south ran out a great promontory ending in a precipice at the sea and rounded by only a narrow path, while to the north were defences, raised by nature, not less formidable. To the west of us in our front lay the great sea, the Medi-

terranean, as men learned to call it, blue as the sky above it, teeming with the fish we needed, and treasure-bottomed because of the rare things which, by lucky happening, we found there. Far in the offing above the tideless waters could be seen a dim blue speck where the sky and water blended, the island Yatnan — the Cyprus of the future — an island of kindly people to be some time followed by others called the Greeks, with whom we were already beginning to do a little trading.

For we were traders! Traders, boat-builders and sea adventurers were we, above all other peoples. The world had learned to barter, it may be from those who had first discovered copper, which all men needed and for which they would exchange that which they had, and we were those who had already made bartering our chief and earnest occupation. This had been the way with us even at the mouth of the Euphrates, whence we had come and where between contemptuous Babylonian and rude Assyrian we had been much oppressed, and so had fled to find this treasure strip. Warriors we had never been, though sometimes, at bay, we had fought well, nor had we been skilful hunters within the memory of our generation. Dark-haired and swarthy, sprouted from an ancient race to the south, some said, we had come to this new land to make, if we might be favoured of our dark god, a better future. Most skilled were we in the many arts, but better still, for us, in traffic in that which we made. We dealt much with the stronger races which endured but did not mingle with us. Now we were to trade from our own land as a vantage ground. The outcome was what no man could dream.

We had built our houses at Akko and had sowed our fields and planted our trees and vines and had builded our boats, and in them had already begun to range the coasts for such trade as might be found, though not so far at first, because as yet we had few goods for barter save the fine linen which the women wove so well, and wool, and cedar timber, and besides, we were not yet acquainted with the strange shores. Our first trade, as I have said, was with the people of the large island Yatnan, which was so near to us, and from this alone arose in time a mighty business of ours, for in Yatnan was much copper, and the people were such we did not fear. Soon, too, there came to us such aid from what the sea gave us, that our traffic, we were assured, must surpass all we had hoped for, our fabrics having given to them suddenly a value never known before.

The bireme in which we went to the fishing was shared with me in its ownership by my comrades Aradnus and Malchus, and it was to Malchus that our people owed a part of their coming vast good fortune. Malchus had many fancies, and among these was one for a collection of the glittering different shells we found upon the shore or in the waters we dredged for shell-fish, of which there were many edible and nourishing. Once in an oyster he had found a pearl of quality, and so it came that he was ever curious to learn what his shells might hold. Much we derided him for his useless searching, but he made answer only that there were many things yet to be learned, and the issue proved him right. Among the shell-fish counted useless by us, because we found them tasteless, were two kinds, each of spiral form and ending in a rounded head,

but one sort more rough and spinous than the other. It was after breaking one of each sort of these twisted shells that Malchus discovered a curious thing.

With a stone, Malchus cracked the shells apart upon a smooth rock where he could observe them closely. That of one sort thus broken and the creature within it shown, there appeared a shell-fish having a sort of sac behind its head, this sac extending into a sort of vein traversing the body, the whole filled with a liquid whitish in colour and having the smell of garlic. This liquid chanced to gather in a tiny pool in the surface of the rock and, even as Malchus studied it, wondering what its use to the fish might be, it changed before his eyes, as the air reached it, from yellow-white to green, then blue and red, then a deep purple-red and, finally, to crimson, which last colour did not pass away. In the shell of the rougher kind he found a creature with a sac which showed also changing colours, though somewhat different of shade. Much Malchus wondered and, at last, he sought a piece of linen and dipped it in the liquid and found he had a cloth of brighter colour than ever known before. He had discovered a wondrous dye! More of the shell-fish were soon collected and there was much experiment with the dyeing, for we all were full of interest now, and it was found, in the end, that by first dyeing with the matter in the sac of the smoother shell-fish, which was abundant on the rocks near shore, and later with that from the rougher kind, which was found in deeper water, there was gained a purple so royal and brilliant that no other in the world could by any means compare with it. Dark and rich it was, like red blood cooled, and, as it was shifted in the light, a blazing

crimson. The rocks and the sea-bottom were covered with myriads of these strange shell-fish, which we caught with baited basket traps let down, and soon our varied cloths gleamed with such hues as would command the desire of all who might look upon them. A marvellous new thing had we for barter, and in the end it brought great fortune, though not all of it remained to Akko. There came a time when vast beds of the shell-fish, and of even more productive quality, were found near swiftly expanding Tyre, and great dyeing was done there, and trade came widely in the colouring and its fabrics until priests, senators, emperors, and the great of all the known world must garb themselves in Tyrian purple as most worthy of their dignity. Surely never were a people's fortunes so affected as were ours by what might be deemed so small a thing as the juice in the head of a sea creature!

But this discovery of the purple dye had but lately come and diverted us only a little from a host of things of greater purport. Our boats and our plans for our sea-roving as we might extend it, were what absorbed us chiefly. Nowhere were better boats than those we had already learned to build, but we were ever seeking their improvement, since our fortunes were dependent upon them. Biremes, as our boats or ships of the better sort were called, were better than those owned by our fathers, not short and rounded and caulked with bitumen, as had been the boats of only a little time before us, but longer and caulked with tar, which we had learned to make, and, in our latest ventures, double-decked so that the oarsmen could work below while their masters were above them. Good ships were these, riding the rough seas well, and

much we prized them. Our only lack was in the oarsmen. We needed galley-slaves, and had but few, and oftentimes the trader and his people must needs take care to the oars themselves. As for me and my companions in sea ventures, we had but two, dark creatures we had found castaways upon a bare island some distance to the south, and certainly of some poor tribe, for the broken canoe we found with them was crude of form and by no means fitted for a sea trip. Blown away they doubtless were from the great continent which bounded the sea on the south, a land almost unknown to us, though we were somewhat acquainted with the people, ancient almost as we, who dwelt on the shores of a great river with many mouths which came into the sea not far from its eastern end. Intelligent the captives proved, in a slow way, and docile enough, though possessed of enormous appetites, which we must gratify or else lose of their strength in the rowing, but which were nevertheless somewhat of a burden on us. However, we hired them to the husbandmen when not upon a voyage, and so regained a little of their keeping cost. We were ever thrifty, we Phœnicians!

More slaves we must have certainly, and it had been resolved, not only by us of the *Spearhead* — for so we had named our sharp-prowed boat — but by others of the traders, that cruises must be made with that end alone in mind, and it was considered that we might find what we sought in some of the islands which lay beyond blue Yatanan, some of them very small and having on them, very probably, so few people that we might make our foray safely and bring away as many captives as our ships would carry. For this we were to band together in a fleet and

join our forces in whatever conflict came, afterward dividing the captives by lot or in any other way we might agree upon. It was while preparations were making for this same expedition that happenings came which greatly changed our plan and had a mighty bearing on our future ways.

One of those who were to take part in the expedition was a most daring and reckless captain having the name of Neco, who but a little before this time had made a voyage to the southward and brought back with him to Akko a cargo of hides, for among us were skilled tanners and cunning workers in leather who supplied many things for our trading, and hides were always desired by them. It so chanced that upon the return voyage of Neco some of the hides which were green and like to spoil were stretched between poles set upright on the deck of the vessel, and that the wind from the south, bearing hardly upon them, pressed the boat most swiftly homeward, the craft requiring only to be steered. And this gave Neco a great thought, and he swore by Moloch that henceforth the wind should serve him and that the labour of the rowing should be so avoided. So vaunting was he in this that he declared that he would yet reach Yatnan and thus return, and the marvel of it was that he did as he had boasted, sailing one day when the wind blew strongly from the east, and returning when it had shifted to the west. Now his pride became overweening, and, having made a great sheet from broad strips of linen sewed together, he spread it nailed between tall uprights and set sail to the southward with a fierce rising wind behind him. His ship disappeared amid the mist and spindrift and never-

more was seen of man. The blast must have been too much for the fixed sail, and the vessel must have buried itself beneath the waves which rolled high upon the day which was the last of Neco.

It would seem as if the fate of this wild adventurer should have brought pause to any who had thought to do even as he, and to call upon the wind in aid in passage of the sea paths, but with me it was not so. Eagerly had I noted the feats of Neco, and it had been borne in upon me that there was a degree of wisdom in his madness. Even his death, of which we became assured, brought me no fear. I, too, would seek to learn what might be done to make the wind our servant, and I set about this swiftly, being to my wonder well supported by both Malchus and Aradnus, who sometimes showed less hardihood than I, but who now, strangely enough, became as deeply lost in this dream of a new conquest for the toilers of the sea. We devised a curious plan whereby we thought we might try the issue with less risk of our lives than had been faced by Neco.

We knew that the greater danger from the wind was that the boat might capsize in a storm, and our first care was to avoid this risk as best we might, though we were resolved to test these dreaded sea-blasts to the utmost. Truly we were half mad, but the zest of the thing had grown upon us. If the risk were great, the stake was great as well, and we fell together under some sort of spell of joyous madness over the prospect of we knew not what. And this was our crafty plan!

Often when ships laden with timber had been cast upon the rocks and crushed, those in dire peril had escaped by



“I, too, would seek to learn what might be
done to make the wind our servant”



lashing together as many of the floating beams as they could, making a raft which would not easily overturn, and so drifting by good fortune to some place of safe landing. Our ship, so we devised, should be a raft; yet more than that; it should be a sort of boat as well, but one unsinkable, and thus we built it, working long with our two slaves, and hewing and spiking the seasoned cedar timbers, of which there was a great store at hand for purchase and of which we owned a part. For many days we hewed and shaped and fashioned until we had a great raft some thirty forearm cubits long, more than seven times the length of a tall man, and more than half its length in width. Of double depth were the dried timbers and so mortised and interset and spiked together that the whole was as one great piece of wood not to be torn apart by the mightiest seas. Caulked it was, though needlessly, for we knew that the water would often come aboard, and all about the sides was raised a stout timbered wall of the height of a man and having many openings at its bottom that the water might escape and we might walk dry shod when seas were calm. So much we allowed the strange craft the nature of a boat that it was tapered to a prow at either end and, furthermore, was hewn so that each prow swept upward from beneath, that the boat might rise on any sloping shore. At each end provision was made for a long steering oar such as we used on the biremes. Upon either side, amidships, was erected a stout mast between which the broad sail of strongest linen was stretched flatly, and in the centre was a shorter mast to which were bound many things which were to form our cargo. There were other short posts as well, placed here and there to serve a

like purpose. We carried our arms and much food, and many lashed casks of water we provided, and certain chests of trinkets and some of more worthy things to barter; for we could not guess what might be our landing-place should our plans fail. It was decided to attempt the voyage to Yatnan and thence homeward as our first venture. So, one afternoon when the sun shone most fairly and the wind was from the east, we cast off the long mooring-rope and were blown gently away to sea, while half of Akko stood looking upon us curiously or jeering at our uncouth vessel.

We were steering for Yatnan, as we thought, but many are the things in the laps of the gods.

Like how many things is the sea! It is like a woman, soft and smiling and caressing, at least upon the surface; it is like a stallion pawing and tossing his white mane; it is like a green forest bending and heaving before the wind; it is like an unbounded sheet of shimmering, supple glass, supine beneath a calm; and, at last, it is like a herd of wild beasts, roaring and hungry and devouring. Let none count our Mediterranean as harmless as compared with the mighty western ocean. The leopard is more treacherous than the lion! Much we knew already of the changing sea, but much more were we to learn!

The eastern wind, still strong and even, bore us steadily, though far from swiftly, away from our own coast until the shore line became dim, and, since it was so squarely astern of us, we found no difficulty in steering straight for Yatnan. Even with our laggard movement we should reach the island by daybreak, and this sailing seemed, in sooth, an easy matter. My companions laughed

and jested, and the two slaves, relieved of all rowing, were agrin and happy. Then the breeze abated somewhat and the wind began veering here and there, and the raft-ship lost something of its headway, while the oar with which I myself was steering became more and more an ineffective thing. Most irresponsible to guidance was yet our new ship upon which we had so laboured in the building. There arose a little black cloud in the far northwest, and, somehow, I liked it not. I wished for the bireme!

At last the breeze died away altogether and we lay there rocked as gently as a first-born by its mother. The little cloud in the northwest was becoming somewhat too lusty for my taste, but as yet there was no sign of really dangerous weather. So we swung and swayed until the sun was low down in the west, and then the lightness changed to something more sombre very quickly, for the cloud had extended itself ambitiously, and the sun's last slanting rays we failed to get. The breeze, too, had returned, coming this time from the north and having a greater and increasing vigour to it. The raft began to act with even less obedience to the steering oar, strain I ever so hardly, for the sail now took the wind endwise alone, and this could not avail. Not long did this continue. The waves had begun to rise, though by no means roughly, and the end of the vessel where I laboured was caught and twirled by one of them so smartly that it lay in a new way, and in a moment the wind had caught a hold upon the sail again and we were turned fairly about and headed for the south, stern foremost, if, indeed, we might be said to have a stern, since the ends of the craft were alike in

every way. We had but one resource. The steering oar was shifted from what had been the stern to the end now made so, and we were sailing again, with oaths or prayers in our mouths according to the impulse of each. My own mood was not greatly either for oath or prayer now. As the uncouth sail filled or tautened and the boat leaped forward as clumsily as it did strenuously, the wild, fierce sense of abandon and utter daring came back upon me in a wave and I whooped aloud in zest of it, my comrades catching the wild unction and yelling as loudly in the same headstrong spirit. Often since have I thought of that audacious moment and wondered if such lifted moods might not be sometimes but the flaming out of a new man and a greater one, to make the most of dangerous opportunity? Have not the best deeds been often but the issue of an outbreak, foolhardy and desperate it may have seemed, of some strong man inspired by that for which he could give no reason? And, launched into some course of hazard, has not man often been so sustained throughout it that he has won his way, laughing or cursing at every jeopardy, until he has accomplished that which was good for him and for his kind as well? Truly the gods have curious ways!

So drove we southward half through the night, when again the wind changed, this time carrying us to the westward, though so gradually that Malchus, who had replaced me at the oar while I lay sleeping, held it so skillfully and firmly that the stern was still the stern, with which feat he was much delighted. With the morning the sun was shining again, though the wind had not abated.

All day we ran westward upon that sea of low-rolling waves, a sea so smooth that no water came over our boarded sides, and farther and farther we were carried from land or means of succour in any greater peril, but I lost none of my heedless ardour nor did either of my companions fail me. Especially was I delighted with the usually silent and thoughtful Aradnus, who, strangely enough, seemed to enter most fully and delightedly into the spirit of the trying of the sail.

"It is well," he shouted to me, as the thing bellied as far as it might before the wind, and the foam arose a little beneath our low prow. "We are getting much wisdom, and more is coming to us! Mark what it does!"

And well indeed marked I that sail. I did naught but study it and note its tremendous promise, and its failings and its menace. As I studied, there came to me slowly a new perception. Why were we so helplessly at the mercy of this spread of linen when the wind blew? Why had we stretched it thus immovably across our raft-ship? As I looked upon it there came such comprehension as made me laugh at myself in sheer derision. Man, not the sail, should be the master, and there must be a way to make it so!

This I had noticed, that when the wind changed but a little, and so smote the sail somewhat aslant, the raft, still held by the steering oar, kept straightly on its course, but when the shift was greater, so that the pressure came more nearly abeam, there ensued a sudden stoppage and we washed about unsteerable until there came another change. This, then, I had learned, that it was not necessary that the wind should bear squarely on the sail, but

that a slanting pressure would do almost as well and still allow us to direct our course. Then, why not have the sail so that we could get such pressure at all times if we willed and so have ever steerage-way? Much I pondered upon this and at last I perceived what I thought might be the remedy.

I have not yet told, save generally, of what we had on board lashed to the many posts, for there had been abundant room and I had made provision for many things. There was one long chest in which I had placed, besides our weapons, a goodly number of tools such as we sailors used, with the thought that, should we be cast ashore, we could build shelters for ourselves, and glad I was now that I had been so provident. More time we would not waste before I had carried out my new design, and so I explained its nature to the others, who comprehended what I had in mind and who at once began the labour with me.

The two masts to which the sail was nailed were set deeply in holes mortised squarely through the timber on either side, but, though tightly, not so that they might not be lifted out by the heaving of good men. Now we took chisels and hammers from the long chest and began the making of similar square holes in a great circle amidships, the diameter of which was the width of the broad sail. It was a task which took us long, but the sea was calm, the chisels sharp and the hammers heavy, and it was done at last. Just as we had the task completed it chanced that the wind shifted so that it came squarely over one of our sides and left us wallowing again. It was not for long. We strainingly lifted the two masts from

their sockets and so replaced them in the new receptacles that the wind, though coming over our side, struck them obliquely and thus again propelled us while the helm oar kept us straightly upon our course. It was a revelation. The sail was being, for the first time, tamed! But there was more to come, and that at once.

I sat upon one of the chests after our first moment of jubilation and watched with pride the issue of the conquest we had made, when there came to me a new idea beside which the first, so carried out, seemed only a beginning! We were ploughing merrily westward now, but westward it was not my wish to go. If, now, the wind, coming from one side of us and pushing upon our sail obliquely could so carry us, as it were, athwart its course, why could it not, in the same way, take us to the eastward, were the sail turned so that the pressure of the wind would press in the opposite direction? I leaped to my feet shoutingly and told of what I had conceived, and forthwith we acted. The masts, or, rather, one of them, was raised and so shifted that when it was planted the sail took the wind upon the other side, and at once we lost headway quiveringly, and soon were sailing eastward! Truly it was a great day in the history of sailing, and one of vast moment to all traders and sea-rovers!

Of where we were, save that we were far from land, I had slight knowledge. Full half the way across the sea we must have come, for the north wind had been a strong one while it prevailed and had hurried us for many a league despite the heaviness of our sailing. The westward course, as well, had been with a southward trend and it seemed to me that it were much easier to find a port on

the African shore than otherwise. But what manner of port might await us in that strange region? Most barbarous tribes, so the Egyptians had told, inhabited the long reaches of sandy or rocky coast, and luckless were those who landed there. I had no plan, we were undetermined of mind as the gulls which swept about us, but land of some sort all men who eat and drink must some time find or perish, and we were not equipped for very long. I counselled with Malchus and Aradnus and, in the end, we acted not unwisely, as the event proved, though there was much to come between. Somewhat we knew of the Egyptians, for between their land and that by the Euphrates there had been a little trade, vast as was the distance to be traversed, including the passage of the strait between the seas, and we knew them as advanced in ways of learning and as generally peaceful. They were unlikely to set upon such weak adventurers as we and of a race which they knew. So it was decided that we should bear to the southeastward straightly as we might and seek one of the mouths of the great river which we call the Nile.

The wind held as it was, and slowly, though steadily, we moved toward the east all through the afternoon of this day when I had devised the shifting of the sail, and toward nightfall at a swifter rate, for the sky was now becoming overcast and the wind was rising. Soon there were mounting waves, and the raft-ship, as I have called it for want of a better name, began to rise and fall in its now more hurried progress and to occasionally dip its prow into the sea and take aboard much water, which did not harm us, since it at once washed out again. We would

have been content with this mood of the wind and sea had it but remained the same, but that was not to be. The storm-god was abroad that night, and drunken!

There be certain men among us Phœnicians who have great gift of words such as I have not, and who can write most eloquently — for we have letters and learning which other peoples lack — some one of whom might, it may be, have described fittingly the storm of that dread night had he but been aboard our raft and had not died of fright, but much I doubt it. There is not stylus to trace the tale of such storm as that in letters! Whereas at the beginning I longed for our staunch bireme beneath our feet, yet long before the morning I thanked the gods that we were lashed firmly to the posts upon our strange new vessel. What a sea-mew proved our riding craft that night!

The wind became a gale, and the gale a most tremendous one. Each man of us was firmly lashed to a stout post, else we would have been inevitably lost. Down one great wave we rode or up or through another, and that we did not drown was only that between the billows we had a chance to gasp for breath. For hours we were thus hurled forward, and when, toward morning, the storm somewhat abated, the change came none too soon, for we were spent to the verge of certain death. Now the raft riding naturally so lightly and so easily, no longer buried its low prow in the oncoming surge, and we could at least breathe steadily again. The worst was over, yet by no means all the trial, though we had no fear. Our wondrous raft had shown its worth in that it could not sink nor capsize. What more could reckless adventurers ask? Still we climbed the towering waves and still rode down

them, rushing to the southeast, but we feared now less the water than the land. It was not a proper sea in which to find a threatening coast. Very narrow was the slant of canvas we now allowed to catch the wind, though to shift the sail with such foothold as that uptilting or descending deck afforded was a feat of catlike merit.

Exhausted, we slept by turns, as best we might, still lashed for safety's sake; and when, at noon, I was aroused by Malchus I looked with pleasure out upon a sea which was not threatening. More, too, I saw. To the southeast appeared afar a blue haze which, as we sailed, revealed itself as a low-lying coast, and, furthermore, a coast revealing the mouth of a broad river, one which could be nothing else than one of the outlets of the mighty Nile! I could not be mistaken, and for that mouth we steered. Our fortune had brought us as fairly to our aim as if our course had been directed by the nicest seaman-ship!

The river entered the sea through the lowlands made by the silt of countless ages, and, for a league at least, we sailed up the deep stream between flat marshland. Gradually the banks became higher and palms showed in the distance, and at last we moved slowly up toward a place where were trees on the river's western side, and there we contrived to land, one of the slaves swimming ashore with a rope by which we hauled in our raft, mooring it stoutly by other ropes tied to our posts. Far up the river we could perceive buildings of stone, and I knew it for a port of some importance of which I had been often told. The slaves we left to guard our vessel, knowing they would not venture to desert us in this strange land, and then we

three — Aradnus, Malchus, and I — after having washed ourselves and doñned fresh array from our scantily filled chest, fared forth to learn what Egypt should prove to us. We had no fears, because these were a people civilized, even as we, though not such daring wanderers. Already, through many centuries, had the sun shone on the great cities of the Nile, and the climax of the power of Egypt's rulers was nearly at its zenith now. We reached the city, not a great one like Thebes, Memphis, or other cities of the upper river, but a prosperous out-lying port with promise of future trading for us.

There were many people in the streets, but we had not thought of recognition. Ever comes the unexpected. Conceive then how surprised I was to hear a call to us in the Phœnician language, as there advanced to me a swarthy man of middle age, a man of good appearance, who spoke smilingly:

“Welcome, Phœnician! Whence came you here?”

I could not understand, yet all was simple. The merchant, for such he was, explained to me that he had for years gone with the caravan to Babylonia, and had so in time acquired the Phœnician language. He declared also that he could at once distinguish a Phœnician by his appearance, which was, however, no marvellous thing, since the Phœnician face was racially distinct, and since we had traits of garb, trifling, it is true, but sufficient to make us somewhat apart in dress as in complexion and demeanour. There was much talk between us and, when we had done, it seemed to me as if that which could not be had taken place.

Here were I and my companions, who but a few hours

ago were tossing about in a wild venture upon an unknown sort of craft, facing death in raging waves and doubtful of our future and our fortunes, now in peaceful harbourage, and, more than that, in a fair way to attain such ends as would enrich us and our people in the future. The merchant had promised much, and it was borne in upon me that he spoke honestly. At this port of Egypt, he said, there were not he alone, but various other merchants who would gladly trade with us Phœnicians; that they had learned of our occupation of the new land and of our prosperity and that they well knew of our ways of trading along strange coasts, so bringing to its market many wares which could not otherwise be gained. Readily would they deal with us and buy of us such things as would add to the merchandise transported by their caravans either up the great Nile to Memphis and to ancient Luxor and other places, or else would be taken with the rarer caravans to the rich marts of the cities of the Euphrates. What a prospect was this for us in Phœnicia, who were now seeking such broader ways of traffic! Gladly I assured the merchant of our constant future sailing with goods for Egypt, and so it soon came that I and my companions, through this helpful first acquaintance, met other merchants and made divers business pledges to them for the time to come. And one business of much profit and great promise came on the moment.

I have said that our sore need in Phœnicia was of more galley slaves, that we might be equipped for the trade we should soon command. Of this I spoke to the merchant, Thomes, he whom I had first met, and from him learned that he and his friends could furnish me sturdy slaves at

such price as made foolish long voyages to gain them, such as we in Phœnicia had in contemplation. Gold we had with us, for I had counselled with my companions that we bring with us such of our wealth as we could carry, and we had it bestowed in belts about our bodies. Upon this store we now drew and therewith purchased twenty lusty slaves at a price which seemed to us but half, and forthwith bestowed them upon our boat and there provided them with subsistence while we awaited the time of our departure some days hence, for I had certain thoughts in mind which were of import. I had more to do with the sail!

Ever, when not engaged in the trading or informing ourselves in such things as might serve us in the future of the ways of these Egyptians, were we considering how the sail might be made a greater thing, and how a portion of the huge labour of its shifting might be avoided, or made more easy; and from these debates and from many earnest hours of puzzling and deep thinking, came at last some birth from my poor head. Our trading — for we bought certain Egyptian goods for sale in Akko — and our communing with the merchants ended, we left the port and set up tents on the shore beside our vessel and there began the labour which must follow my new thought concerning the handling of the sail and making it more subservient to swift occasion.

The labour had been great of moving the masts about upon our deck, and this labour it now came to me was needless, for by means of a single mast the sail could much more easily be shifted. And this, with much shrewd counsel from Aradnus, was what I now devised.

First, we raised amidship, though a little toward the bow, a single sturdy mast, and next we stretched the sail upon a strong frame, which frame was hung upon the mast, securely held by encircling thongs supported on outstanding pegs and so sustained that it might be swung in all directions, hanging thus firmly and flatly. To the middle of this frame at either side were attached long ropes to be pulled from the deck by the slaves, thus giving us the power to slant or hold the sail in any way the wind might call for. It was but a rude device — much better way did we later find for the sail-shifting — but it served us very well. I was resolved to return to Akko in our strange ship, though the merchants made ready proffer of one of their great rowing vessels to carry us by oars alone along the great stretch of coast. This would not serve us. Our slaves must be trained to the rowing, and so I had provided oars and the fastening oar thongs and seats along each side of our vessel. We might thus make our tedious way by oars alone, but we would not. The sail must have its further testing, and its control must be learned by all of us. Henceforth we must be sailors!

What need to tell the story of that grand voyage! The sail served well, though truly not as it came to serve us a little later, and the new slaves had learned their oarsmanship before we came into the bay of Akko. What need, either, to tell of the manner of our reception by our citizens? There was no longer scoffing, and when our tale was known to all there came excitement among all the captains concerning the trade with Egypt and there were made preparations for many sailings. As for us, we moved both mast and slaves to our bireme and prepared for much

adventure. Soon, too, the other biremes, as well as vessels of lighter sort, were bearing sails, and, though crews were lost at first through too great recklessness in time of storm or through great ignorance, yet the age of long voyages by rowing had passed forever. Both I and my companions thrived and, after some profitable trade with Egypt in glorious purple fabrics and in other things, and when we had builded another and greater vessel, a trireme, requiring many galley slaves, there came to each of us who had once faced the danger of the sea together a desire for new adventure and, it might be, graver peril. The lust of far roving had come upon us, and we would not be denied! We loaded the trireme with many goods and an abundance of arms and thus set sail to the west and north, for we would explore the shores of the vast continent there lying and harbouring, as we knew, a host of many different peoples, how barbarous we could not tell. We knew, though, that they had no boats with sails, and that we could flee that which we could not face. No man aboard but was gleaming of face when the *Seeker*, with white sail outspread and not a single oar outthrust, save those for steering, swept bravely from the harbour.

Never was voyage more curiously doubtful from day to day than this, and never one to prove more the index of vast happenings in the future, though that we could not know. We sailed at first discreetly, for we had some knowledge from the people of Yatnan concerning those of the islands beyond them, and with these we did not wish to have acquaintance at this time, for they had no cities nor any goods of value. It was the continent upon which we placed our hopes, for there were legends of

ancient kingdoms there, and of peoples living upon the shores of the far western sea who were as old and as wise as any in the world, and owned fair cities and much riches. I may, even now, tell that we found none of these, yet there still exists the tale of an ancient country beyond the westward strait between the sea and the ocean, and which tells of how the ancient land, Atlantis, was swallowed by the waves. Of all this I know nothing, and doubt if it is known of any man.

So we skirted the many islands west of Yatnan and the mainland reaching down among them, and laid our course more straightly northward, soon to find ourselves in a long and narrow sea branching far upward from our own beside a long peninsula shaped like a boot. A great distance up this sea's eastern shore we sailed, passing mostly rocky coasts, and rounding its far extremity and returning upon the western shore, where we found life indeed, but life of an almost savage sort. There came to the beach to meet us when we made a landing a band of scores of people, men and women, clad in skins and most abundantly tattooed in strange designs. Yet were not these people altogether savage and they were peacefully inclined. They had little for which we cared to barter even trinkets, and so we left them. Then came another sort of sailing and it was well for us that we were most skilful seamen now, for surely the voyage had its perils.

Westward, rounding the tip of the great boot of the peninsula, we turned, and entered a passage between it and a big island upon which a huge volcano was vomiting its fire and smoke. Here all our skill and courage found their test, for more desperate and dangerous passage could

not be than that between the island and the mainland: fierce, treacherous currents threatening to cast us upon terrifying rocks on one side or the other. Very content were we when we came into the open sea again and laid our course upward along the western shore of this great boot. It proved a pleasant land enough, though we passed another huge volcano in eruption and rearing its sombre plume high in the heavens; and on making landing we found a people made up chiefly of villages of harmless fishermen whom we liked well, but who had as little to barter as those upon the other shore. So we voyaged still farther northward, and entered a river, up which we sailed but a league or two, seeking the reason for a smoke which arose there and which, we thought, might betoken some home of man. We were not mistaken. There were men and women there, lusty and vigorous, of two tribes in alliance and occupying a straggling double village scattered over seven close-grouped hills, through which the river ran. Here we lingered for several days, learning much of the people of this village — Roma, as they called it, — and of the ways of those who lived in it. They were a rugged people, most full of enterprise, and chiefly engaged, it seemed, in raiding the tribes about them. With us they became upon good terms and we made trade for such tremendous store of wolfskins as must make our voyage profitable. Little we could divine that in centuries to come Phœnicians should find here one of their greatest markets, and that Sidonian broidery should bedeck the robes of Roma's fair women and Tyrian purple band the togas of senators and nobles and of emperors. We sailed away well satisfied. Not much farther

did we make this voyage reach, though sailing a day or two westward toward the strait leading to the unknown ocean, and finding naught to induce a landing. Then straight toward Akko we laid our course, conveying with us to our people new knowledge and many worthy wolf-skins!

No more need I tell of our increasing trade of far-flung sails. Phœnicia was growing in prosperity as never land had grown before. Yatnan had become Phœnician and we worked its copper mines, and had a temple in its city, Paphos; the fame of Tyre and Sidon was extending throughout the lands of Egypt and the Euphrates, and our ships and caravans carried such wares as might tempt all peoples. As for we three, Aradnus, Malchus, and I, we were now among Phœnicia's richest men. Of the rest, it appertains chiefly to me alone, and is not as I would have it!

Of Elissa, fairest of Paphian women, I have no complaint to make. The gods will judge her, but not the gods whose nostrils fed upon the sacrifice. There was none like unto her in all the Yatnan city, and we inclined to each other, and, after much earnest wooing, she became my wife. Proud I was and prouder still when she bore me a son, lusty and comely, who soon had twined his little fingers round my heartstrings and whom, after the way of doting fathers, I deemed the fairest child in all the world. They were golden days which followed, until I sailed away again upon a voyage — and then came Baal!

Of the religion of the Phœnicians I have not yet spoken, and only in rage or shame may one tell of its quality. Of its origin I know nothing save that the great Baal, or Mo-

loch, as one with him, was as the creating and yet burning and destroying sun, and that he must have his worship and his sacrifices. Lightly was this religion held by such as I and the other sea-rovers, in whose faces blew the pure winds of the sea and who had seen and who knew of things beyond wild superstitions, but with the people of the cities and the fierce, unknowing rabble this was not so, and they were under the dominion of priests as bloody-minded and full of frenzy as the savage cannibal creatures who dwelt in distant places. At this time, too, the worship had grown up into an idolatry of the most wanton and abandoned character, and celebrations were made common, ending in wild lascivious orgies wherein men ceased to be men and women no longer women, and wherein, as a beginning, there was burnt great quantities of incense, and bulls and horses were sacrificed in honour of the god, and finally — the horror of it — little children were given to the flames!

The image of Moloch in the temple was a beastly human figure of metal, with a huge bull's head and outreaching, receiving arms. In the grossly protruding belly of the monster was a door through which a fire was built within him, that children laid in his arms might roll thence into the red consuming furnace beneath! What strange madness of faith may have misled and impelled them in their superstition who may describe, but, incredible indeed, there were those who thus gave up their children willingly, even the first-born and the only one! If it cried, the mother would fondle and kiss the child — for the victim must not weep — and the pitiful sound would be drowned in the clamour of flutes and kettle-drums. Silent and

unmoved must the mother stand, for if she wept or sobbed she lost the honour of the act and its reward, and the child was sacrificed, notwithstanding! Could there have been no other and stronger and more merciful gods, and where were they when such things came to pass? But of these horrors I must not take account. I avoided them, and we lived our happy life remote, my wife and child and I. I went to sea content, and eager only for swift trade and swift return. Scarce knew I even of the existence of Phalos, the dark-visaged high priest of Moloch.

How it came about it was fated I should never know, but I can dimly reason. Ever, since religion began, have the priests of every faith used woman, credulous, yielding, and fatuous, as the chief instrument for promotion of their sinister dominion. Gentle and faithful was my Elissa, but somewhat inclined to dreaminess and observing the prayers to the gods, though partaking in none of the rites of the fanatics. Most resolute she was, too, when a matter became fixed in her mind, though to me she always yielded. Yet in the body of this fair and gentle creature might lie, ready for distorted moulding, the soul of a new zealot, deadly and sacrificing. Alas for me!

Most profitable had been my voyage, the winds were with me on the return, and I was full of the joy of the thought of the welcome which awaited me, when, one afternoon, a sail showed far in our front and swiftly nearing us, which I soon recognized as that of Marinus, captain and trader like myself and one of my closest and most sturdy friends. Soon he made signals that we should

check our course, and then was rowed aboard us. His aspect was black and ominous.

"Strain every sail!" was all he said when first he spoke.

Then came the hideous story! How or when he knew not, but my wife had passed under the grim spell of the priesthood, especially under that of Phalos, the high priest, a man overbearing and ruthless and ambitious. Counting on my absence, and of the force which might be raised to face me and my allies on my return, my only one, the man-child of my heart, was to be made a sacrifice to Moloch on the morrow, and so the too truculent and irreligious captains be taught, through me, a needed lesson! Swiftly as he might, Marinus, trusty friend, had put to sea to warn me, and now he would sail back with me to aid me in what might come.

I answered not. I could but grasp his hand. At last my voice came and then but broke forth in a bellow to spread every sail and man every oar and drive forward the ship as never ship was driven before! How they sprang to do my will? What look of deadly import came upon the faces of Malchus and Aradnus! Marinus departed for his own ship, to follow in our course.

What sudden freedom and happiness must not madness sometimes bring! How good to change, relieved from agony of mind, into unknowing, babbling forgetfulness! But no kindly madness came to me in those long hours when the ship, though so forced upon her way that Marinus was left behind, yet seemed to me to only creep along the hindering waves. So passed the long night; sullenly through it all I could hold converse with none, though

my companions would comfort me in my affliction and so sought, in vain. With morning the wind still held us, and with mid-afternoon we entered the harbour of fair Paphos. Even as we swung inward a boat darted forth from the land bringing a messenger from another of the captains — for my vessel had been awaited by my friends as Marinus had arranged. Then fell the blow! Now, even now, the rites in the great temple were in progress and my child about to be offered as the sacrifice!

Then, with need so ghastly, the better gods gave back my reasoning strength. We would invade the temple and would make a rescue, if it were within the power of man. I took swift and stern command anew. I would lead with Malchus and Aradnus next and a portion of my crew as well, the others remaining to hold the ship in instant readiness for sailing. It was the counsel of the wise Aradnus that, should the child be saved, we should sail at once for Egypt, where were a host of friends, and where priests of Baal had sometimes been flayed alive. I looked upon my brown-faced crew and knew that I could trust them, even the sun-burnt galley slaves. How many times had all these ranged dangerously beside me in times of struggle with the savages! I took from my weapon chest a certain Assyrian axe I cherished, short-hafted but broad and keen of edge and heavy. I kissed the axe and laid it against my cheek and then thrust it in the bosom of my tunic. We landed swiftly and rushed toward the temple. Vast was the throng about the structure, and inside I knew must be as dense, save for the great open space before the place of sacrifice. Wedge-shaped we struck the heaving mass and drove through it as wild boars

through reeds, straight past the entrance, even to the inner circle of the mad worshippers, and, as I leaped clear of them, my eyes were smitten with the whole dread picture! There, before the altar and the beastly red-heated image of the leering god, side by side stood Elissa and Phalos, the grim high priest, he stern in his power so manifested, she proud and erect as she passed my child into his waiting hands. How a blasting picture can transform a man!

In all the world of living men there was not another then so strong as I; in all the wastes and desert places of the vast forests there was not a wild beast more ferocious; in all the earth or in the heavens above there was no being with more swift and certain mission! I bounded across the space between us, leaping to Phalos even as he took the child and was about to face the grinning idol, and then, as he turned at my hoarse shout and our eyes met glaringly, I drove that Assyrian axe down through that head, down through that crafty brain, down sheer between the hating eyes, and, as I caught the child, he fell crumpingly as any poled bull of one of his own sacrifices! I saw but as an instant's vision Elissa sink to earth in a white swoon, and bounded with my child toward the entrance where the fray was raging, while about and behind me rose first the groan and then the yell of vengeance of the frenzied worshippers. Naught for the moment checked me with my circling axe seeking more blood. I reached nearly to my followers, so near to Aradnus that I tossed the child to him over the intervening heads and had the joy of seeing him, upon my shout, bound away with it toward our vessel and so preserve its safety. Nearer

and nearer to my own men I struggled, but I could not reach them. The fierce guards of the priest were all about me now and a thousand of the mob were crowding savagely behind them. I felt a spear thrust in my side, and then another, and so went down most happily. My man-child would become a man in Egypt!

CHAPTER XIII

THE HERCYNIAN FOREST

WHAT it was which had changed the nature of my dream so suddenly I could not understand at first. Most curious fancies had come to me, visions of what I had certainly never seen in all my hunting and battling, but which were familiar enough to me and comprehensible, until I awoke. There were boats with broad sails, though little of the sea had we of the great forest ever looked upon, and there were cities beside which our villages were but as the swamp villages of the ever-toiling beaver. There was conflict, as well, yet that, I thought, did not surpass in quality the manner of our own fierce battling, for we were fighters of some zest.

I had been aroused by sounds quite apart from those which had come to my fancy with sleep on the heaped leaves beneath the beech tree. Most unlike either the sounds of the sea or of rude conflict were those which reached my ears as I came slowly to a sense of wakening being; they were of a kind all their own and having a quality much too significant and close and threatening. It was a snuffling, blowing sound which first aroused me as I lay with my eyes still closed, and at last a grunting and snort and rumble which was half a bellow, and a harsh pawing of the leaves and earth. My eyes opened most suddenly,

and what they saw brought a feeling in the middle of me which was most uncomfortable. Within a yard of me, his head lowered, his nostrils quivering and his eyes gleaming, pawing the ground in what was fast becoming a rage at the thing before him, stood braced a monster aurochs! The aurochs was most enormous of all the beasts we knew and, when enraged, by far most to be dreaded, unless, it might be, the huge brown bear, though the bear himself never dared face the aurochs. Here was a situation for a man to awaken to, but after the first moment I was not alarmed. I knew the nature of the aurochs well. Had he been in pursuit of me, wounded, perhaps, by spear or arrow, nothing could have turned the monster from his wrath, but here the case was different. The beast had come upon me but by merest chance and, advancing only in curiosity upon this thing lying prone, had encountered the dreaded man-smell and had been so roused. I knew my need. I sprang to my feet with arms outflung, emitting a most unnatural and blood-curdling roar, and, even as I leaped, the startled brute, leviathan though he was, whirled as on a pivot with a hoarse bellow which was rather a bleat of fear, and went crashing into the forest whence I could hear the crackling of the bushes hundreds of yards away.

I was all myself now, as assuredly I should be, after such a rude awakening. I stood there, comprehendingly, Scar, warrior and hunter, a strong man of the Cherusci, than whom there was not a braver tribe among the scores which occupied the vast Hercynian forest and took part in its fierce struggles.

A world in itself, a world of its own great kind, was this

Hercynian forest, extending boundlessly eastward from the Rhine River and north to the German Ocean, and south until it reached far toward the great sea of which we had slight knowledge, a huge and densely wooded land of varied nature of mountain, hill and plain and, near its shores, of deep rivers and endless marshes, but mostly vast and sullen forests in which ranged many wild beasts and which, because of its huge extent, sustained strong tribes and clans, who, though scattered widely in villages or roving bands, made, together, a great host.

Whence we had come we did not know more than that we of the north were of the Ingævones, a numerous people who in ages past had come from a far country to the eastward, one so distant that years were required in the hard migration, and the ways of which we had long since forgotten. We had divided into tribes and had taken names for these and were often at war with each other, having, up to this time, no sort of confederation for need against a common enemy, such as lay beyond the Rhine to the westward, or other nations on other sides. Of these we knew many things, though not so clearly as we might have done, for with them we had naught in common, being well satisfied with our homes and manners in our forest fastnesses. That to the south and eastward there were those who had great cities and who sailed the great southern sea we knew, that to the west, beyond the Rhine, were the people of the Gauls we knew, and that we were usually enemies to them, and this was all. Our own drift as we grew, at least of the Cherusci, was northward from the headwaters of the rivers called the Elbe and Weser. South and east of us

and near us lay the tribes with whom we sometimes had good fighting.

And how could we in our deep green fastnesses know greatly of the outside peoples? From the tales our fathers had told and from the Gauls across the Rhine we had learned something, it is true. We knew of the eastern peoples only that they were very old and very distant. Of the Assyrians and Babylonians and the Egyptians that they still existed, and that a race called the Phœnicians inhabited the land at the eastern end of the great southern sea and made rare weapons such as had sometimes come to us, and that they sailed and traded much. Grown strong, too, were now an island people called the Greeks. We knew, too, from our Gaulish neighbours whom we fought so often, that a new dread had come upon even them and that far to the south, not distant from the sea, a new nation appeared, arising swiftly, and that its people were ever ready for war and very dangerous. Dwelling in a village they called Roma — which was already becoming a mighty place — its people made invasions upon the territories of their neighbours, though its clans were ever fighting among themselves. All these things we learned, but little heeded. What cared we for the stories of the peoples of past ages? We wanted only our own great forest and our own gods, our own wars, and no invasions from strangers from afar.

So all through the great forest lay our tribes and lived their various wild lives, which nevertheless had much of order in their way and cleanness of living and obedience to our laws. Of religion we had something, though it did not bear upon us with unwholesome stress. For what

may have been the faith of our Asian ancestors we cared not. Woden and Frigga and their retinue of lesser deities sufficed us and appeared to serve us well.

Yet we, barbarians as we were called by the distant and older peoples, lived lives such as in their uprightness of a kind might well have compared with the lives of later and craftier ages. Clearly defined were the lines or marks which showed the limit of each tribe's wide land, and so within them were the marks of each clan which had a village. The villages, indeed, were almost little countries by themselves, having scant relationship with each other, save at the Folk-Moot — which, even now, was not an old thing, but which gave to us a form and saved much bloodshed — though ties of blood were strong and, among themselves, though so separated and each clinging to his clan or village, the Cherusci dwelt in rude brotherly accord. It is but fair to say as much of those of other tribes often our feudal enemies. Of vices, we had but two, the lust for fighting and the vast drinking of strong mead to glorious drunkenness. For the rest, we obeyed the Folk-Moot, where such laws as we had were made when we assembled, and regarded well the mark line and the lines which gave the allotted portions or hides of land, and the rights to the nut woods of oak and beech where fed the swine, and where were the rare salt springs, and the name sign on the trees of him who had found wild honey. In each family its head was lord. Furthermore — and who would think it of so-called barbarians? — our women were well regarded, the wife was the husband's counsellor and friend, and purity and chastity were held the rule for all. We were a strong and healthy race, great of stature,

fair or more often red of hair — which, man and woman, we wore long, — and gray or blue of eye. The youth were trained to hardihood, and the brood of either sex was ever a numerous and goodly one. What wonder that there was among the multitude of forest dwellers no envy of those of the outer world, — unless, it might be of their more finished weapons, — and but a desire for our continued isolation? We were most jealous of our lands. Even our villages were far apart and their wide boundaries of surrounding wildness well defended. Of the many usages and ways of ours I shall tell further.

There were certain clans who had no fixed abode, wandering long distances and living in huts to be abandoned; but such as these had become fewer and fewer and now most of the people lived in villages, some little and some great, but all with broad lands about them, whose boundaries were marked in many ways, some by scarred trees, sometimes by stones and sometimes by other tokens. So, as well, were marked the limits of the hides of lands allotted to each family, and these must by no means be disregarded, either the village mark, or the limit of the allotments. He who took an allotment, too, must, in token of possession and defense, break a branch from some tree upon it, or seat himself in the midst of the field, or build a fire upon it, for its ownership was a grave matter and not to be considered lightly. Some tilling the women did, though we were, as yet, but little farmers, and they also wove and spun. As for the men, we lived first for the fighting and the honour, and chiefly next, it seemed to me, for the feasting and deep drinking, with hunting and fishing and the fashioning of weapons as our only labour.

Great were our feasts and it sometimes happened that they had more to them than mere carousal, especially when the feast was to one who had died valiantly in battle. There would be much eating and drinking, it is true, but there would also be much praise of the dead, which came generously from great hearts, and earnest prayers that Woden would receive the hero kindly. It seems to me that it was to our honour that we did not forget our dead, not even the little ones who passed, and I recall me that I made and kept for a friend one for whom I had heretofore cared slightly, because, when his child died, he had buried in the grave of the little one its foolish playthings and had slain a dog the child had loved and buried it also, that the dog might show the helpless and timorous one the way to the country of the dead. Stark and harsh and rough we were, but, in some things, we were most kindly and but as children.

We had a kind of reverence for some of the things about us. The oak tree we much regarded, and next to it the beech, not alone because they gave acorns and nuts to our herds of swine and to ourselves in times of strait, but because we held that they possessed a sort of sanctity. Curious it was, too, that one insect should be so regarded. This was the bee. Great was the value to us of the honey the bees furnished, our only sweet, and of its use in the making of our strong mead. Hence came the marking of the bee trees wherein was stored their honey. Heavily was he punished who cut down and plundered a marked bee tree, but if it were not marked by the first finder there was no punishment. So it was that about the bee grew up a sort of faith. Bees, it was held, had a language of

their own and could understand what was said to them, and it was not counted wise to kill one. To be a hunter of the trees in which the bees concealed their stores was counted worthy of even a warrior, and I was proud that at this I had been gifted with no mean ability. Well must he know the wilds and be ready to fare patiently and far who would discover where the creatures hid their treasure, and shrewd must be his knowledge and close his nature to the wild things. It may be that I was thus close, for I was somewhat a man apart and had my dreaming ways. I had no wife. There had been one among the maidens, deep-eyed and fair and strong and red of hair as I, whom I had loved much and who would rest in the place in my arms, but our wood gods had it otherwise. There came a time of fever, and she died, and after she had been buried with my golden bracelet pledge on her round white arm, I cared no more for women. My bed was in my brother's house, and his children cherished me, but I loved the woods and the chase and the bee-hunting and was much away, with all my fancies, at some of which the warriors laughed, saying that I was sometimes not unlike a dreaming girl, though it had been I who brought home upon my spear the head of the grim Suevi champion after one of our hardest battles.

All was not unbroken forest in our region; there were blue mountains far to the south, and here and there were little plains, and in the forest itself were sometimes clear spaces, flower-covered, where the bees sought honey for their storing. I have clearly in mind a day when I sought one of these smiling distant places.

Often have I questioned myself if it be meet or becoming

in the strong man to consider and often delight in the fair and curious things upon which his eyes may rest, or feel the joyousness which comes to him through other senses. Should not his thoughts and desires dwell only on sterner and graver matters — the fight, the chase, the keen searching for the honey stores and the protection of the herds? This puzzlement I can by no means decide, but this I know that ever I follow my own will carelessly, and so have had much pleasure without effort, save to smell or look or listen. Why should I not? Does not the brawniest and most soil or blood stained warrior smack his lips over the rich juices of the cooked bird, and do not his eyes gleam as the mead runs down his tickled gullet? Do I not myself enjoy these things, and why should not I, if I have the mood, regale my other senses? Yet, as I have said, my comrades would sometimes jeer at me and call me foolish names because, forsooth, I rejoiced in the many glories of the world. Little cared I! It was somewhat known of men that my thews were mighty, my spear a sharp one and my axe of goodly weight, as had been proved in stubborn battle, and so I fed my fancies when I willed. On a day of which I speak they had food worth while, for surely there could be no fairer or more bounteous place than this for their indulgence.

It was a clearing enclosed by forest on every side. A tornado may once have stripped away the trees upon it, for it lay on rising ground, and fire had doubtless swept it afterward. Upon it now was no growth save many clumps of bushes, some of them in heavy bloom, and soft greensward and flowers of a thousand kinds, of every hue which flowers may have. Was it unworthy of me as a

hunter and proved warrior that I stood unmoving for a time and allowed my eyes to feed their fill upon such a scene as this? Was it not, in its way, as good as the taste of deer's meat or as the gurgle of the heartening mead in the throat? And there was more than the eyes alone could comprehend.

Myriads of eager bees were humming above that gay spread of flowers, and the united sound of the commingled droning had such volume that it made seem fainter the singing of the birds in the wood about, though not many were to be heard at this hour of the day. A few generous ones there were, though, their voices of such sweet quality as to commingle softly with the mighty humming and seem almost to form a part of it.

Yet what idle talk is this? It seems but foolish to tell thus of the flowers and bees and of our more peaceful doings, though, mayhap, it will make more clear the colouring of the lives of us — the mighty forest people. Was I like the weak Buoba, of the village, who was not enduring in the chase and who had never been in battle, but who sometimes made soft verses and who told strange tales and was, somehow, not a little beloved? What of it? There was the sound in my ears, and the ears were surely my own as was my fancy. And not alone were my ears and eyes made glad, for there rose from that great field of bloom such volume and drift of perfume as filled my nostrils to their utmost depths and which, wafted through the forest by the wind, might well call from a far distance the hosts of labouring bees. The fragrance, I fancied for a moment, had its effect even on the great stag which came from out the wood across from me and raised his head

aloft and sniffed the air, though it is more likely he was but assuring himself against all danger ere he began his feeding. He did not dally at that, and was setting me a good example, for certainly I had not come here to regale my senses, so I strode into the sunny clearing as he, with a great snort of alarm, bounded upward and then into the wood again. In this field must begin my quest for the places of lofty beehives to be plundered, and thus I set about it:

I had brought my weapons with me, for he is foolish who would go unarmed into the forest, but other things I carried as well, since there was much craft to be displayed in this hunting for the bee stores. I had beeswax with me and a portion of honey in the comb, and also a staff sharpened at one end, having at the other a fastened box without a cover. The staff I thrust into the ground and the honeycomb I placed in the box above. Then I found a flattish stone near by and brought it to near the staff, and upon it, using my flint and the back of my hunting-knife, kindled a tiny fire upon which I laid the wax. Very soon the wax melted and there arose from it a little smoke and an odour which was wafted to the myriads of incoming bees and at once attracted them. Swerving from their course, they circled a little and then settled down upon the awaiting honey, a prize of note for them, since it would require no alchemy of theirs in fitting it for storage. Then I had naught to do but to watch. One by one, each rioting bee there gorged to the full and then, rising upon heavy wing, flew toward the forest whence it had come, straight as the downward dropping of a stone. Some flew in one direction and others on a

different course, but I followed with my eye the flight only of the company which seemed most numerous. Straight toward the west they went, toward where I knew was a swamp, beyond which was a forest of great oaks. Their home I knew could not be in the swamp; hence somewhere in the oaks, most like of all places. How deeply in the forest it might be I could not tell as yet, but soon would know in a degree. Across the field I carried the staff and stone and did just as I had already done, the bees, as before, coming in numbers to the feast. Again I watched, noting most carefully the direction of the flight of the group I had first chosen, and saw that now they flew not straight toward the west, but a very little to the north of it. Now I had become a menace to them! I knew that their home and place of storage was at the point where the two lines I had determined met, and it seemed, judging as best I might, that it could not be a great way in the far-extending wood. Around the swamp I went with all my gear. As I neared its western side I set my staff again and watched the flight once more, then, faring still farther until I had passed the western end some little distance, I did the same and found, to my delight, that the two flights appeared to come together at some point not more than some four or five hundred yards within the depths of the towering oak wood. There I but circled about, the bees coming to the honey now in hosts, and as soon as they were laden flying almost directly upward. Very keenly I searched upward now and found what I was seeking. Extending straight outward and upward from the trunk of the mightiest of the oaks was a giant blasted limb, and upon its side I could perceive a fissure in and

out of which the bees were coming and going in countless numbers. Mine was the bee tree! I drew forth my short axe and cut the mark which all recognized as mine, three crosses, one above another — we had no letters or written language as yet, as had some eastern nations — deeply into the great tree's bole, and so made sure my prize. Venturesome would be he who should cut down the tree thus marked by me. That toil should be my own when I so decided, a great toil doubtless, but one worth bearing, for the limb was huge and the bees a vast swarm, and within the lofty hollow must be stored honey to sweeten the bread of many a feast and supply the mead for many a score of brimming urus horns. Thus sought I the honey!

Our houses were all of wood, and simply built. We had no glass for our windows, and it was not uncommon that skins were hung before them, to be held aside by thongs or left hanging down for protection against storms or the cold, as the season and the weather might determine. Inside, the furnishing was as rude and simple, but there were home life and comfort there, except sometimes in winter, for with us the winters were often bitter. That we did not suffer greatly at this season was because of our practice in building our habitations. The better houses rested upon logs reaching across above a great cellar which in winter could be made the living-room, affording sure protection from the cold. Somewhat lacking in pure air this underground hall might be, but here was much companionship and merriment. Here mighty bows were fashioned and here the women wove the spun linen which we wore beneath our robes of skin and fur. There was

rarely lack of food, and so the winters, long and keen, were not greatly a terror to us. Our cattle and horses and our herds of swine fared not so well, but, somehow, lived, for they were hardened to the climate and to scant feeding upon mown marsh grass and store of garnered mast.

It was not in the winter alone, however, that we were forced to guard our various herds. The big brown bear had a fondness for the hog or colt or calf, and was not inclined to make the attempt upon the family of the huge wild boar when lesser prey was to be found, and the many prowling wolves had tastes as trained. In winter especially were the wolves menacing, for then they gathered in packs and were dangerous to man and beast alike. The fierce lynx was another enemy.

Yet we could not grumble at the forest, which we loved. If it had its perils it was none the less our provider and our protection. It gave us nearly all we had, and, first of all, abundant food. There were the aurochs and urus and wild hogs and the great stag and lesser deer, and grouse and geese and ducks and various other game; and we were shrewd hunters. Sometimes we made pits for the aurochs or the urus, and sometimes hunted and slew them with bow and spear, though such latter chase was always for those possessed of hardihood. The aurochs, the monster bison, most ponderous creature of the forest, was not inclined to attack man if unassailed, though his charge when it came could not be stopped. But with the urus it was different. He would assail the hunter whenever he perceived one, and few there were who dared to meet his onset with the spear. The wild boar was scarcely less evil in his temper. As for the hungry, lumbering

brown bear, he often stole upon or pursued man as the opportunity came, seeking only to devour.

We were well armed, though in a somewhat varied manner, for we had little metal and there were few in our scattered villages who could forge the weapons, and so it was that those possessed were cherished. There were axes and spears and swords of copper, and more of bronze, and a few of the new metal — iron, which men had but lately learned to use, and all these were from our fathers or gained in battle, or, more lately, through a trade drifting through many hands from the far people who made fine weapons. So it came that a goodly sword or spear or axe was a prize always to be sought and the gaining of which gave zest and aim to many a raid and risk. My own sword had descended to me, but my battle-axe had not so long ago belonged to a chief of the rude Chauci, the tribe to our west who had such a longing for possession of our salt spring, greatest holding of our wide mark. Salt!

For the sake of salt we would submit to any labour, endure all hardship or face any peril which might arise. Without it our life must be a different thing and harder. Without it how could we preserve our meat and fish and have the best provision for our grim winters? Our eating had the greater flavor from it, and with it we were more assured of having that which to eat. Honey was good and the mead from it arousing and exalting, yet what gave they but pleasure?

The use of salt seemed as the line between the good and the bad, between the foul and cleanly. The wolf and all the musky beasts of prey abhorred it, while the whole-

some ones, the aurochs and urus and stag and deer, sought for it eagerly where the water seeped from the spring into the long grass of the marshes. It had become to us a first necessity, as it had to those of other tribes. It was like a symbol of life to us, in that it preserved and saved from putrefaction. It had become a part of our existence. What should we do without it? To our direct and simple reasoning, it seemed a substance kindly and aiding, apart from other things, and vaguely sanctified. It was thought that from the salt springs prayers to the gods ascended more quickly than from elsewhere, and, sometimes, when the land allowed, places of shelter for worship were made beside them. So, the possession of a salt spring — though there were many within the length and breadth of the great forest — was something to be guarded and to be fought for to the death. Many a spear had been thrown, many a sword thrust, many an arrow sped, and many an axe had risen and fallen about the salt springs. What wonder that we fought for them as we would fight for home and wives and children — doing stern battle, to whatever end might come!

Our own spring, by what was our mischance, lay at a distance from our village near to the border of the Chauci, of whom I have spoken, and was a vast temptation to them. Our village would assuredly have been built beside it but that the spring issued from a little rise of land within the edge of a great marsh, with a damp lowland all about, such location as might in no wise serve for a proper dwelling place. There was no shelter near, and the winds came harshly from the distant sea. Nevertheless, we builded a great shed beside the spring as a shelter in time

of the salt-making, and raised a barricade of logs upon the forest side as some means of defense in case an enemy should make an onslaught. As often as we needed it the most accustomed of the tribe would make an encampment by the spring and there prepare the salt, though in a way unlike that of our ancestors, who had been accustomed to get the salt in a most curious manner, building a fire of logs and quenching the flames with the salt water, and when it was out, raking away the ashy crust found clinging to the embers. A better and far easier way was ours, for we now had the kettles in which to do the heating and condensing of the water into what we wanted. In autumn, when the time came for putting aside the fish and meat for the winter, a large company would go from the village to the salt-making, and the gathering was made almost a festival. There had always been sufficient force either with or of the workers, and no evil had ever come to them, though, at other times, the Chauci had once or twice invaded the spring and made salt there unknown to us. They also possessed a spring, but it was not as generous of flow as ours nor so convenient for those who lived the nearest to us. There had been murmurings and distrust over this intrusion of the Chauci, but there had followed no encounter, though the invasion was in violation of all tribal law, and though we had often come in conflict with the Chauci.

It has been a prosperous and pleasant summer for us, yet somewhat of a dull one, for there had been no conflicts and the older warriors were disposed to grumble at what they termed either indifference to honour or great slothfulness. Had not a band of the Harudes been seen

hovering about our southeastern mark, and had not there been a disappearance of some scores of our half-wild cattle? Had not certain most promising bee trees toward the line of the Juthungi been cut down and despoiled, and was not either of these outrages sufficient to demand some sort of raiding in reprisal? It was true that the Juthungi had their home some distance from our borders and that we were not assured that our cattle were taken by the Harudes, but should such small lack of certainty prevent us from displaying our hardihood and prevent us also from acquiring such booty as might come in our way? Such chance, the seasoned veterans declared, would not have been neglected in their own fine youth. I know not why, but all this passed and there was no raiding, it may be because the dulness of the year was somewhat broken by the festivals in honor of the youth who had arrived at the dignity of fighting men, and by the consumption of much mead at these same festivals. A serious occasion, albeit an auspicious and a pleasant one, it was when the youth became of age to be counted among young warriors. This year there was near a score to be thus exalted, which gift of many was counted good as making the families stronger. The youth were trained in warlike exercises, and happy the father who could boast most sons. They were taught a contempt for death and that the tie of kinship was ever to be observed. So strong, indeed, was the need and the desire for kin, that when one lacked a family he sought blood-brotherhood with some other, and, when this was agreed upon, each would cut the palm of the hand and let the blood from the wound run into a little hollow in the ground, so that from the blood commingled might

be pledged the brotherhood for life, to which they swore with clasped hands. Kinship and brotherhood meant greater strength, and so it was not strange that when new youth entered the elder ranks there was rejoicing and much ceremony in the bestowal of arms, and afterward much feasting. So it chanced that in this year of which I speak, with many youth to be initiated, the ceremony over one almost overlapped that of another, and that most of the warriors, drinking deeply and boasting of fights which had been and would be, were somewhat careless of the present. I know only that we had been at peace for all the summer, and that, though I had found good hunting and had fortune in the finding and marking of bee trees, I had myself a sense that time was beginning to move with somewhat laggard feet. Moreover, there were certain weapons which I desired renewed for my equipment and which I could not get within the tribe. Yet I held my peace in the debates, well knowing that after the initiation of the various youth the warrior would be restless.

It is of these same youth that there is something curious to tell, a thing beginning in mere love of the young for any wild performance and the doing of that which the elders might look upon as childish or unmanly, but which here had, in the end, a great result. I have said that we had horses as well as horned cattle, but the horses, like the cattle, were for food, and were rarely mounted, since the forest was scarce the place in which they might be used with freedom. It was counted almost effeminate in a man to ride when his strong legs should be equal to any journey. The youth took small account of this; lightly

they held to elder views, and so a company of some score or more of them had contrived to capture and tame to riding a number of horses, performing some fine exploits with them in a broad clearing at a safe distance from the village and from all surveillance. They rode well, guiding the horses with their thonged bridles and flourishing their long spears, as they had heard did the horsemen of the Gauls, and I, who, because I had no family of my own, was somewhat of a friend and, it may be, a too lenient mentor to them, felt a certain pride in their performance and had no notion of betraying them. Indeed, I felt that I somewhat aided and abetted them, and of this last I had no regret.

So drifted we up to the time of the first falling of the leaves. The days passed and the autumn grew and the hunters were out and the boatmen were on the rivers, fishing them even to the coast with their nets of woven marsh grass, and soon we would have great store of meat and fish for storing. It was time for the yearly salt-making, so a small company of the youth were sent ahead to the spring by the marshes to prepare for the coming of such older ones as should direct the boiling and other labour to be done. All were engaged in the preparation, and the band departed shoutingly at dawn, for to the spring it was a full half day's journey.

That night the hunters came from the chase vaunting and heavy laden, for they had met with great good fortune, having surrounded and slain an aurochs of huge size, so adding at once no little meat for the salting. Never was clan in better mood than was ours on that night of much eating and drinking by the tired though noisy

hunters. Well into the night the revelry continued, when there came that which changed the nature of the feasters. There were short, dull cries from the outside, and then staggered into hall two of the youth who had gone with the little company to the salt spring. One was bloody of head and face, and each was, at first, too scant of breath to tell his tale. It soon came, however, and was such as to make each warrior seize upon and brandish aloft his weapons and swear an oath as to what would be the deadly happenings of the morrow!

The Chauci had seized upon our salt spring, defying us at last, and had done the deed most cruelly. Scarce had the youth reached the spring and begun the cleaning of the boiling-shed from its bed of drifted leaves, and to make ready the places for the fires, when there appeared from the nearby wood a band of Chauci who rushed upon them, casting their spears and chasing swiftly with their other weapons. The youth, brave enough but far outnumbered, fled into the marsh and across the neck of it and so gained refuge in the forest at a point some distance from the spring, but not before two had been slain. Hardly had they reached the forest's edge when they saw a larger force come from the wood and join the first band of Chauci at the spring. Of these the two youth judged there were at least three hundred. The fugitives had fled straightway homeward, and deemed that the others who had escaped should soon be with us, though of this they were not fully assured, since they had scattered themselves for safety's sake, and it was possible that the Chauci might have pursued and captured or slain more of them. Happily this was not so. The remaining fugi-

tives came in before the morning broke, all wearied from the long run and the hiding, and three of them wounded by the thrown lances.

There was no more wassail, but, in its stead, swift and stern preparation for what was soon to come. We of the elder warriors spent little time in council or the devising of any plan, for we knew that it could be only a stubborn grapple of almost equal forces, with no advantage of ambush or surprise to either side. We could rally as many of our clan as there were of the invading Chauci, and for more we cared not. We would ask no aid from other villages of the Cherusci, though, should we be beaten in the fight, there would doubtless follow a war between the whole tribes, for blood is thick and the Chauci had now been transgressors boldly; but, should we win, the matter would doubtless end with that, since we would have had our vengeance and, perchance, some booty with it. There were some who counselled marching at once upon our foes, but it was decided by those among us who had the leadership that the attack should be made in daylight, and so it rested. All night, all through the village could be heard the sounds of the sharpening of swords and spears and axes, and the pattering of hammers studding and fastening more securely the leather on the linden shields. The sun had scarcely risen before we had eaten and were set out on our grim march. No able man in the village but was of that avenging company, save some score of the riding youth of whom I have already told and who, because I spoke for them, were allowed to march apart, that they might, as their leader pleaded, come in upon the Chauci from an unexpected side and by their

sudden charge do more, if might be, than if they marched and fought with all the rest. At first this was denied them, but I had some dim reasoning that these reckless ones had in mind what might avail exceedingly, and my earnest counsel and demand that they be given the chance to show us what stuff for warriors was within them at last prevailed.

No sign of the Chauci saw we until we came close upon what we knew must be the battlefield. They were not ranged about the spring, but were massed, as I had reasoned well they would be, in the thick wood near to it, where they would have some measure of protection and where we must attack them at a disadvantage, for the wood there, though dense and heavy, was apart from the main forest, and could be reached only by passing across a wide open space where we would be exposed to their spear-throwing and their arrow flights. Nevertheless we drew together, holding our shields before us and so launched ourselves across the open space.

It was a grim and furious charge and no man failed, but our foe had the advantage. We gained the forest's edge, but our spears and arrows were turned aside by the close-set trees and brush, while upon us in the open rained such flight of weapons as could not be avoided or long withstood, and not a few of the Cherusci fell. We had suffered grievously when, with a blind and desperate rush, we entered the wood fairly and there, though engaged now on more even terms, found little better fortune. The Chauci, well knowing what must follow their defeat, fought like savage beasts at bay, and most skilfully as well, keeping together and meeting us with stroke and thrust as heavy

and in a rage as fearful as our own. Back and forth we swung together in that dark killing-place, and, for a time, even the shouting and the threatening ceased and there was only the harsh sound of weapons. We fought unflinching, as Cherusci should, but were the more wearied of the two forces, for we had marched far, and had now lost some of our best warriors and, finally, there came a little yielding. Strive hardly as we might, it did not cease, and soon, though with our mass unbroken, we were forced into the field again, the Chauci pressing fiercely with yells of triumph, until they, too, were in the open. Then followed such fighting as had not been often seen or had been told of in the feast hall!

Face to face, we stood in opposing ranks, Cherusci against Chauci, and no man thought of aught save killing. We were now the lesser force, but none gave that a thought. There were the Chauci, and they must be slain! As for me, I had gone stark mad with the battle lust. Man after man went down and another took his place, but we had the lesser weight, they were as desperate as we, and we were driven back, though slowly. Then came the sudden and amazing end!

From the main forest on one side rang out a shouting almost boyish, and then from that green wood burst forth a score of beardless horsemen! The ground was somewhat sloping, there was room for headway, and, sweeping down in a mass together, the young spearmen burst in upon and through the Chauci, as though they were but corn! Never before in forest fray had been such hurling of ridden horses upon footmen. What could withstand such charge of thundering beast, or the

bent spears, of which none failed to reach its man! Crumpled and split apart and scattered were the Chauci by that fierce onslaught, and we, the warriors, leaped after them and slew them as they fled, pursuing them into the forest ways which led toward their home and overtaking many. Well had the youth displayed their warrior blood, and, more than that, had taught us much. Henceforth the horse would be exalted.

Foremost and swift was I in the grim pursuit, and overtook three of the fleeing Chauci in a little glade, when they turned to face me. It was a fight of but a moment. My axe descended on the one who seemed to be the leader, and then came to me what was beyond all evil dreaming! Even as my axe sank into the Chauci's head one of the others, who had darted aside as I made my rush, swung his long sword behind me foully and I tottered and fell crumplingly to earth there, hamstrung and helpless and a lost man forever! What mattered it that one who came panting behind me cut down the knave who had crippled me? What more had life!

The pursuit by our warriors ended at last; they gathered together the weapons of the slain Chauci and all the spoil of their camp, and, afterward, made a litter in which they carried me, as they did the others who could not walk. The march wound to the village, which was reached at nightfall. Most carefully was I attended. Loud had been the acclamation of me as foremost in the battle, and my leg was shrewdly bound, as was also a little wound in my left arm, which, before, had bled most steadily. Afterward I was placed upon a couch of furs in the feast hall, where presently would be held the feast in celebration of

our victory. Sadly and sullenly I lay. Then came to me a wondrous resolution! There came before my eyes a vision of one helpless and crawling. Where were now the battle and the chase and the fair hunting of the bee stores! What grayness lay before me! What held life for me now, for me who in the morning had been at the crest of strength and pride and who had hewn my way to greater honour through a warrior's day! What pitiful old age might come to Scar, the hamstrung! Yet, what honour comes to the hero who dies laughing at death and fresh from where much blood has flowed? I thought of her who was wearing my golden armlet, sleeping quietly, and life seemed hollow at the best! I thought of the long years of hobbling, and my mind became as iron, as my gorge rose. They were making ready for the feast now and I called my friends about me and told them I would feast with them, and directed where my seat should be, as I drank deeply with them and that I should be lifted to it, and they did as I commanded boisterously and acclaimingly, for they knew well what I had in mind, though in the eyes even of those warriors shone something of wonder with their pride. The feast began and the vaunting and the shouting and the deep drinking, and then I shouted loud, though I could not rise, and bade them hail and vaunted of the brave day. Hoarsely and loudly I told them how I was about to die cheerily, as a warrior should, before the eyes of fighting men, laughing and showing to the youth the manner in which a hero passed to Woden!

Lifted I then my wounded arm and tore away the bandage from where a goodly vein was sheared apart, and

opened it anew with my dagger, and the red blood came out and ran with a soft patter to the floor as I let the arm hang low beside me. Four brimming urns of mead I quaffed then, and shouted and waved the horn above me and sang the praise of the Cherusci, and the warriors shouted with me and would have lifted me aloft but for my wounds. More deeply yet I drank, and more boasted of the glory of the Cherusci, and still heard the ceaseless dripping to the floor. The mead was bringing languor, and it seemed to me that, because of this fine sleepiness, I spoke less bravely, repeating much, and stumblingly, the words I had said before. Surely, I thought, a better mead was never brewed! The lights flashed and the warriors shouted over to me. I was warm, and my head nodded. Great were we of the Cherusci and great the life of a warrior! My head sank on my breast. The whimsy came; we warriors might be strong, but assuredly grizzled and bent old Harling, who brewed our mead, was mightiest among us! I bent forward prone on the table, with my head upon my unwounded arm, the other yet dangling. Still came to my ears the patter of the blood upon the floor. Strong was the mead!

CHAPTER XIV

ALESIA AND THE END

THAT there had been a sea fight was plain from the look of the deck, upon which blood was splashed about and gathered in some places into little pools, now turned to a dark purple in the sunlight which was shining down upon it pleasantly enough. Pleasant also was the breeze which was carrying the galley westward without any aid of man in the guiding. Of the fight itself, it seemed as if I could remember something, though but confusedly, for first it would appear that we were battling among trees or in open ground, and then again that we were thrusting and striking and grappling up and down a tossing and slippery deck and that hoarse shouting was mingled with the roar of a great wind. Now, there was neither much wind nor any shouting. I lay with my head upon some sort of a not uneasy pillow and looked upward into a sky without a cloud. I felt a stiffness in my limbs and there was inertness to me. I made shift to rise to my knees and at last to my feet, and looked about me weakly, and considered. Yes, assuredly, there had been a sea fight. My pillow, the quality of which I had not noted, showed that, for it had been old Regner, now lying motionless, who had borne my head upon his bosom while I lay senseless. A huge spear, which had entered at the shoulder, protruded from his side, and he

had bled much, lying there transfixed so savagely. I found that I had wounds myself and that there was a great bruise on my temple which still somewhat affected me.

Slowly, as the wind blew coolly on my forehead, came back to me a knowledge of what had been our evil fortune and how it was that I, a man of some presence among our daring company, I, a Viking of the Angles, should be drifting thus wounded and alone in mine own ship, helpless to guide it. The crafty Romans had outwitted us and we had not been spared!

In our fast shield-ship, not a very great one but swift upon its way, we had been lying in wait, as was our custom, in a small bay of the Gallic coast, awaiting the near passing of any vessel which seemed to offer booty. What came, we cared not greatly, for we feared no enemy we might encounter, though preferring much some laden Phœnician trader still venturing to Britain. In default of such rare prize we must content ourselves with a chance ship of the Veneti, who also had some traffic beyond the narrow sea.

Proud were we Vikings, for was not ours the blood of the bold races of the forest who had swept up the Elbe five hundred years ago and, dividing into kindred tribes, Jutes, Angles, and Saxons, had seized upon all Jutland and, from hunters and river fishers, had become most bold and skilful sailors and the most adventurous of rovers of the sea? Already there came dread to the dwellers at the riversides and all along the Gallic coast and, sometimes, even to the shores of Britain, when our shield-ships showed their sails against the distant sky. No ship of the Gaul

we feared, but we sought not acquaintance with the now frequent Roman galleys, since they were prone to come in squadrons. Ever we kept a lookout for them and cared not when they appeared if only there were space enough between us, for we could outsail them easily. This was not so much because we feared, as because there would be but little spoil to follow the taking of a ship containing only legionaries, and there was the further reason that, were we ourselves to be taken, we would die at once. To the Roman, and it must be said to most others, we were but ravening pirates, ruthless and dangerous as the sharks of the sea or the wolves of the land, and meriting only death. Little cared we! We had but inherited the ways of our ancestors from the time when they raided the lands, each of the other, in the German wood or seized upon the holdings which seemed good to them as they fought their way northward from the branched sources of the Elbe and Weser. Yet we were never cruel, and lacked not loyalty and faithfulness unto death to friend and blood kin.

We were not as yet a great force, we rovers of the sea, though each year our strength increased. Our sharp-prowed ships were swifter than those of others, our sails bore better, and our arms were stronger at the oars in failing winds, but as either clan or tribe we, as yet, made no great war. We were but bold adventurers, each captain fighting for himself and his own following. Of religion we knew but Odin and the strong gods with him. It was so among each tribe of us, the Jutes above us on the great horn of land called Jutland, we Angles next and the Saxons below and nearer the restless peoples of the vast

forest. The Romans knew us not apart and called all us Northmen, Saxons, though we were not as one in our scant rulership, and sometimes had our battles over marks. But we were of the same proud blood and did not fight with each other when there could be found a common enemy, such as existed now, since the conquering and oppressing Cæsar had, in a great sea fight, overcome the fleet of the Veneti, who were traders and had more ships than any other Gallic tribe. Afterward the victor had built more ships of his own and landed in Britain and done much damage, besides exacting submission and hostages from those nearest the coast. After this there still remained a number of the Roman ships which sailed about the coast of Gaul but did not come into the northern sea. These we avoided though we still made forays along the Gallic shores, having no other place for profitable venture. With this Cæsar, we of the upper coast beyond the Rhine had made no war, nor had he made war on us, deeming us but barbarians of a land not worth the conquering and of a kind only to be done away with, if it might be, when his ships encountered ours and which had happened but few times, since, as I have said, we avoided all such meeting. Yet now, I knew as my memory came back, that we had indeed been tricked and had mingled most bloodily with these same Romans.

We had been rejoiced when, from a point of land beside a little bay we had discovered, just as a black storm threatened, a ship nearing us which, as the manner of its building showed, must be a trader of the Veneti, having broad sails of skin, such as the Veneti used, and high prows and lifted stern and showing a structure broad and deep and

strong. We were at first surprised, but considered then that Cæsar was no longer harrying the coasts of the Veneti and that, since conquering them and afterward causing the death of many, he had allowed those remaining to engage in all their avocations as before. So we thought it was possible that their traders were venturing forth again. Of this we were more assured as the ship neared us and we saw upon its deck only the sailors needed for its handling in the increasing tumult of wind and sea. These wore the Veneti dress and we could scarce restrain our shouting. There would be little of good fighting, but much plunder.

There were only some thirty of us in our shield-ship, for, as I have told, it was not a large one, but our arms were strong and ready at the oars, and despite the thundering sky and now high rolling waves, we swept out from the bay and fairly athwart the course of the oncoming vessel before its people appeared to see us. Then there were loud cries from them and a swift rushing about to change their course, though all too late. Swiftly we circled in beside them and cast up our grappling hooks and, shouting our hoarse war cry, poured over the unprotected bulwarks and upon the deck, there to hew down or take captive the weak Veneti crew. Death rose to greet us!

Leaping to their feet, shouting the Roman battle cry, a full hundred armed legionaries who had lain concealed upon that treacherous deck — even as our feet touched wood — were upon us with cast javelins and spear and sword. We were lost in the mass of them, each one of us surrounded and defending himself against too many.

It was a bloody fight for but a little time, and only that the storm waxed fiercer and all footing was uncertain, we would have all been slain the sooner. There was no quarter to be hoped for. I felt sharp wounds before I reached the deck, and sprang backward against the bulwark that I might face the onrush to better vantage. They came in upon me so swiftly and so closely that I slew two with my axe and then I felt a spear point lightly, and sprang apart from it and upward, clutching, as I leaped, the ropes slanting from mast to side, and so stood with my feet upon the bulwark, holding with one hand to the cordage and smiting downward with my axe once more. I turned to our ship and, even as I turned, it was lifted upward to me by the raging sea, then outward, and I heard the grappling hooks tear harshly away through the oak rail. And in that swift moment, even as I leaped, a stone cast by a slinger struck my head and at once I knew no more.

And now, after how many hours I could not tell, I stood clinging to the mast that I might keep my feet and making study of the body of stark Regner. He alone had been left on guard aboard our ship when we cast the grappling hooks; and it was easy to see that he had been slain by a spear thrown vengefully from above, as was revealed in the manner of his transfixion. Surely slight suffering had come to Regner, and little had he felt the shock when I had come down upon him, and the storm tore our ship away from our enemies and hid us in the bosom of its darkness. Certainly bold and careless, though very silent, sailors had been we two as the waves tossed us, and my wonder was that we were yet aboard and the ship

afloat unharmed. It was well built and strong, however, and no sail had been up when we made our attack, and so, somehow, and by sheerest fortune, it had floated until the storm subsided and we were now riding on smooth waters. And now I looked all round and away upon the sea more searchingly. To the westward I perceived a dim uplifting, darker than the hue of the water, and, as the breeze carried the ship forward, this dimness became more solid and it was made plain that it was land. Well did I comprehend its meaning. I, alone and wounded and in one of the hated Viking ships, was drifting helplessly upon the shore of Britain. My death, it might be, had been delayed for only a little time, but what of that? Death was the Viking's brother. A weakness was coming upon me and I slid downward to the deck and slept.

When I awakened something of my strength had come back to me, though not that of a strong man, for my head had been hurt most evilly. Yet now I could rise by the mast again and look more calmly and resolutely upon the land I was approaching and which now rose clearly to my sight, and not more than an hour's passage, at the rate the vessel was now drifting.

Now it chanced that I knew more than a little of this strange isle of Britain. For years I had been in almost daily speech with a British slave named Locrin, now an old man and under my protection. He had been captured long ago when fishing with companions in one of their curious open coracles of skin, or currachs as they were sometimes called, and had in time become almost an Angle, for he had been treated kindly under the roof tree of my own family and clan. Him I had, as I grew in years, been

accustomed to take with me in my hunting, and sometimes on expeditions, and from him had I learned not only the manner of life of the Britons, how they fought their enemies, the raiding Caledonians which sometimes came from the north, and other like things, and had also gained from him some knowledge of his language. This I had used with him in sport, with the idle thought that it might some day become of use to me in my adventures. He had become a most faithful thrall and I, in turn, had learned to hold him somewhat closely. It was ever said of the Briton that as a clansman he was most loyal to his chieftain. Glad was I now, in a somewhat sombre way, that I knew something of this wild isle toward which I was being carried and of the people whom I must meet. How I might be received I could but guess, yet I knew well that it would most likely be as the wild beast caught prowling. Slight reason had the Britons to welcome with extended arms the Viking stranger. Who welcomes the plunderer, even though the plunderer be shorn of strength, and helpless? Assuredly, my thoughts were gloomy as I drifted.

Very slowly lapped the waves against the galley's prow, and the wind which carried it ahead seemed to adjust itself most nicely to its doubtful mission. I stood with my back still against the mast, as needs I must, and saw nearing me each moment a prospect which was not unpleasing in itself. Fair were the Kentish shores of which old Locrin had often told me, and fair her woods, whatever of danger for me might lie concealed within them. The shore itself was a bright sandy beach up which the gentle surge rolled far, and beyond that was a stretch of sward

and bush soon lost in a wood as dense and green and heavy as I had ever looked upon. Of human beings there were none in sight nor was there any other sign of life, though far away in the forest I could discern the rise of smoke. What might that forest hold, I dimly thought, to fix my fate or fortune?

The tide seemed with the wind, and my sailless ship was nearing the shore so steadily that soon it must ground itself upon the pleasant beach in water so shallow doubtless that I might make shift to wade ashore, if strong enough. Still stood I leaning against the mast and scanning the long wood narrowly. Then, suddenly, my gaze was fixed.

From around a point where the forest extended far down toward the beach, swung into view a chariot such as I had never seen, its galloping horses deftly driven by a swart skin-clad man wearing a sort of helmet and what appeared to be a breastplate. Behind him, resting one hand upon his shoulder and swaying easily with the chariot's movements, stood the stateliest and fairest woman my eyes had ever rested on. Behind the chariot followed, running close and easily as if accustomed to it, some score of guardsmen, a few with shields and spears, the rest all armed with bows. So, for a moment's space they came, then saw the ship and made instant halt, the horses pulled backward on their haunches and the whole company closing up at once about the chariot. What marvel that these Britons swerved? A Viking ship upon their very shore!

The company did not flee, but stood and looked, the woman still in her place and gazing long, with one hand raised above her eyes to aid the scrutiny. Some time she

studied, then seemingly gave an order, and the chariot was driven forward, though more slowly now and followed by its company. My ship had come, by this, close to the land and must find ground in a moment, which it did just as the Britons drew up opposite and not more than a spear's length or two away. They looked upon me silently, the woman, upon whom the others seemed to wait, most curiously and gravely. At last she spoke, and her words were brief enough: "Viking, what do you here?"

Glad was I then that from old Locrin I had gained some knowledge of the Briton tongue and could make some little shift at speaking it, albeit most stutteringly, for now it might stand me in some saving stead. What should I answer?

A little I paused and debated in my mind and then, looking into the clear and questioning eyes of that proud woman in the chariot, I did not hesitate nor falter. Stammeringly and haltingly, I told my tale as best I could in the strange tongue, with bold and simple truthfulness, concealing nothing. I told of my own name and standing and of the foray and the sea fight and of all that might concern my captors. The men stood listening with mouths agape, though with stern and threatening faces, but the fair countenance of the woman did not alter. I knew that she was passing judgment. At last she spoke again, slowly and thoughtfully:

"Viking and wolves are much the same to Britons, but it may be that your tale is true, and it is not without merit in you that you have fought the Roman. Other than I must pass upon your fate."

Then, turning to her people, she commanded that I and the body of dead Regner be brought to shore, which the spearmen did, supporting me, who found myself still weak, and laying the body of my comrade upon the sand. Then, without further parley, and under direction of the woman, the band returned the way whence it had come, I walking with a supporting spearman on either side. We reached the point from which the company had first appeared and there came upon a roadway leading into the forest. Upon this roadway we travelled it may be half a league when we reached a crossroad, and there we came to a halt.

“Take him to where the king is sitting,” said the woman then, to those about me, “and say to King Cadwallon that I will follow swiftly, that I may make all clear to him relating to the prisoner.”

Then she looked upon me fixedly, but saying nothing, as I also looked upon her most steadfastly and as I had never before looked upon the face or into the eyes of woman. There came to me a marvellous understanding.

There were, among the race of Vikings, poets who made the Sagas and had gifts in the divination of what was most fair and noble and beyond all common things or hopes or fears, and from one of these had come the curious and lofty affirmation that it might happen, though most rarely in the world, that a man and woman should for the first time look upon each other and that there should come to each the vast knowledge that they two were but as one in a loving which could not be in any way withstood or denied, calling for any sacrifice. And so it

was! Well I know it to be unbelievable, but, as we stood there thus, she a haughty princess of the haughty Icenî, as I came to know, and I, a Viking haughty as she, but rude and rough of port and now blood-stained and grimy, the truth of the thing so strange came out like light between us. Each knew it well and each accepted it unfalteringly, for we were made of such a mould. No loftier or more courageous was I in my degree than my fair and stately Goneril. We spoke no word, but, as we parted at the cross-road and her chariot swept away, I knew that beyond all doubting I should find her with King Cadwallon and that she would have already spoken.

Two days we travelled through the land of Kent, and each day brought me greater wisdom. Let none say that the country of the Britons is but a vast waste of forest, moor and fen, peopled only by wild beasts and tribes of men almost as wild as they. So had I thought it and so had those on the mainland, deeming only that along the island's coast there might exist among the natives a variance from the barbaric and outlandish customs of the interior. On this same winding journey — for we sought the easier ways and made no haste — I saw herds of feeding cattle and droves of horses, and meadows and reaped fields, and many a rude but goodly homestead. Never had my eyes met fairer prospect than that on which they rested in this region lately ravished by the Roman, and I wondered not that its people had defended it as fiercely as they had vainly. My bent was all with them. My guard of ten sturdy spearmen, somewhat glum in the beginning, became amenable upon the way, and from their leader, himself a Kentish spearman and having some little

wisdom, I learned that which gave me cause for wonder and hard reflection. We were marching through a bruised and smarting region, one where the souls of men were seething in unavailing rage and bitter protest. Cæsar had come and gone. He had not advanced far into the country but he had slain many of the islanders and ravaged the fields and, having driven the Britons into their forest fastnesses, had forced from their chieftains a promise of submission, and had taken hostages away with him. No harm had the Britons done the Romans before this harsh invasion. Little they knew of Roman intrigues and ambitions, nor of this Cæsar's wars and conquests. They were content to live alone in their own way upon their own green island. Yet to them, unheeding and unsuspecting, had come this scourge, without a pretext. There seemed no recourse and no vengeance for them. They had been smitten, and their hostages were with the Roman army. What wonder that there smouldered in the breasts of these hurt islanders such hatred and such fear as may not be described! All this I gained from what the Kentish spearman told, and it was not in me to feel unlike the islanders. Truly they had sufficient cause for hatred of the Romans!

I asked the spearman concerning Cadwallon, the king, and learned still more. He, it seemed, was not the king in straight descent, but because King Lud, who had reigned before him, had left only children as heirs, he had come into power as regent, seemingly, but really as king in fact. Cadwallon, as the Britons called him, and as I also shall, though he was called Cassivelaunus by the Romans, was not altogether a bad king, but was held somewhat weak at times

and he had, besides, certain enemies among the more envious and ambitious of the chiefs beneath him. Fortunately, the invasion of Cæsar had not reached his capital on the river called the Thames, and he was still secure in power. This capital was a place called London by its people and by all other Britons, though the Romans had named it Trinovantum, and was the town of chief importance in the land, having existed long and, being a port, reached from the sea and drawing the trade of the Veneti as well as, sometimes, of the far-trading Phœnicians who came to the southwest, the Cassiterides, for tin, and who sometimes extended their bartering voyages up the coast. Much pride had the Britons in their town of London, of which the legend ran among their Druid priests — some of whom were learned — that it was founded in the dim past by a Trojan chieftain who, fleeing after the fall of ancient Troy, had sailed with his people even to distant Britain and, after overcoming a race of giants living there, had builded this town beside the Thames and named it Troy Novant. This tale, however, I hold to be a fable. The Druids were ever liars.

From this man, too, I learned much concerning the stately lady of whom I was the captive, and who had given order as to my disposal. She was the great Lady Goneril, he said, a princess of the Iceni and kinswoman of King Cadwallon. There had been trouble among the Iceni as to the succession, and at this time the family opposed to that of Goneril was somewhat in the ascendancy and it were better in many ways that the princess should seek refuge, for the time at least, at the court of her kinsman. An aunt she had also, wife of a chieftain of Kent with

whom she was but now a guest. Only brave words had the man of Kent for the fair princess, and, even now, my heart went out to him because of it. Most imperious of mood she sometimes was, he said, and of great influence with both the king and her uncle in Kent, but ever generous and just, and much beloved of all, from chieftain down to churl, Icení though she might be. All of this much delighted me and gave pride. Most curious, yet just and due it is, that a man should cherish, even as his own, the honour and fame of the one woman to him.

On the morning of the third day we had news of King Cadwallon that he was hunting with a company of his nobles and attendants in a forest not very far southwestward of his capital, and to this place we took our course, the Kentish man who led being well acquainted with the region and all its devious wood-paths. It was not long before we neared the forest where the hunt was, a region where the guide told me were many stags and not a few of the brown bear, and soon we came upon parties of the huntsmen, who gazed upon me curiously but who did not molest us but gave instruction as to where to look for the king. It was mid-afternoon when we came to where he had paused for rest and meat after the long chase of the morning.

There were many tents pitched in a pleasant glade in the midst of the forest, one of them a pavilion larger than the others, and this was the king's. We were halted by guards with spears scattered in a ring about the brief camping place, who, after our leader had told his mission, sent one with him to the king's tent, and kept the remainder of us with them. It was not long before the

Kentish man returned and said that I was to go with him at once. He took me to the guard at the door of the great tent, and by this guard I was taken within and so before the king.

There were a goodly company assembled there of chiefs and nobles and fair and stately ladies who had taken their dinner with the king and now were moving around and talking together, but who, as I was brought in, ceased in their conversation and looked upon me with much interest, from which I judged that my story was already known to them — as indeed it proved to be. I stood now before King Cadwallon, and there took note of what manner of man he was. It seemed the Kentish man had told me of him well. He was of manly height and framed like a good warrior, but his face was somewhat drawn and the look in his eyes was not of one who felt his power supreme. Richly garbed he was and grave and stately of demeanour, yet lacked his eye the eagle flash. Naught have I to say against this King Cadwallon, naught, though it came to pass that I knew him well indeed and never did his friendship fail me, but I could have wished him to be of a front more confident and even arrogant, since he had about him such wild and untamed lords and chiefs of clans. I shall not disapprove Cadwallon.

The king addressed me gravely, saying that already he somewhat understood my story, and asked me that I tell it to him with more fulness, as affecting, it might be, his own decision in the matter of his course toward me. I must perforce obey, and so related to him more completely than to the Lady Goneril all circumstances of the voyage which brought me such evil fortune, ending with what I

thought a not unwise addition to the effect that we Vikings had no war with Britons and had never sailed against them.

To all I said Cadwallon listened most patiently and, it seemed to me, almost with approbation. He answered that it was very true that we had not forayed in Britain and had done no harm at any time, save it might be that some reckless ones had captured a few currachs of the fishermen who ventured too far at sea, for which no grudge was held against us, and he added, what was to me most heartening and promising, that we were kindred in spirit, while not of blood, in hatred of the Roman and that, at this time, we were counted, not as enemies, but as allies in whatever of war was likely to come to either of us. Then he spoke still further to me, who had of a sudden become most emboldened and at ease, saying that, having known of me from Lady Goneril and of my degree in my own land, he had it in mind to deal with me as one of rank and one having knowledge of the sea and ships and also of the Romans, and so to offer me service with him, with such command as might be later determined.

Here was sudden change of fortune surely for a shipless man and prisoner in a strange land! At first I knew not what reply to make; then as it came upon me how many of my friends were slain and how bereft I was of all things while here was opportunity for adventure which might lead to important happenings, I was inclined to accept the service, though still I hesitated, for a Norseman is ever a Norseman utterly. Then rose before me the face of a woman standing in a chariot, to whom I had given a great wordless pledge, and I paused no longer! I swore

to give good service to the king and, raising me from my bent knee, he declared me one among his chieftains and bade me join the nobles about and make new friends, with one to aid me who was waiting. Then turned I and looked again into the eyes of Goneril!

Most prideful and stately seemed the lady, yet, in her dark beauty, there was laughter in her eyes as she took me by the hand and led me among the company, making me known to many of them and saying, as she laughed, that the king had accorded me her thrall, since she had taken me prisoner. I was, she said, to lead her little company to her uncle's hold, there to acquire a better knowledge of Britain speech and Britain forests and ways of fighting, until I should be called to closer service by Cadwallon. I was well received by most, though some were silent, and I saw among the company of nobles not a few who seemed to have in them the stuff of hardy fighting men, though not of such breed as were in Jutland. Some slight acquaintance made I, but there was little time — besides, my mind was much on Goneril.

Next morning, with a slender train, we set out on our way through Kent. Only a rune-maker should tell of that too short journey through the Kentish woods and winding pathways. It is not in me to give a sense of its sweet flavour. Not many words we said at first, but we did not need them. We only knew — we two, each proud and close of heart — but knew as others might not know it, yet the trees knew it, and the birds and squirrels in the trees knew, and the horses upon which we rode. Only the men who followed us could fail to know!

We came upon the evening of the second day to the

hold of Gerguint, who had married Bera, the aunt of Goneril, where we were received as became the princess' rank, and where I was accorded as pleasing welcome, for a messenger had arrived ahead of us to tell of my degree.

Of Gerguint, whom the Romans later called Carvilius, I must now speak freely, as soon he proved himself to me, and of him I cannot speak too well. A strong prince of a strong fourth among the Kentishmen, he was one after my own heart, fearing nothing and having that understanding which makes one of high blood know of and recognize that which may be in another. It was in his mind to be to me as a close friend, and so he was from the beginning, hunting with me and showing to me all the differences there were between the Viking and the British ways, both in the chase and in the modes of warfare. Much he delighted to go forth with me in my Viking ship, which had been brought along the coast and drawn into a twining small river entering his lands, from which place we made short voyages along the coast. The Britains were not worthy as sailors and this was soon perceived by Gerguint, who now desired that they should build them better vessels, learning the things which would serve greatly for their own defense, and this he sought to bring to the attention of the king. So he and I became good friends.

And for Goneril and myself what shall I say? It is hard for a man to tell properly, so that it may be at all conceived or understood, of what is between him and the woman whose breath has become his own. No difference made it with us that the blending and welding had been so swift and unaccountable. It was a fate met willingly

and, even when the time for words of mine had come, few were demanded. I sought to tell, in my unfashioned mode, of what was in my heart, and she but smiled upon me and told me that I need not speak. What days were ours as we rode the glowing Kentish woods in the late autumn and she told me of her people's ways and sought to make me comprehend them, and of the boundaries and friendships and animosities of the many tribes and clans, and all else that might tend to make me fitted for some rule among them.

And what strange half history and legends had those islanders! Of these dim tales my Goneril told me many, and in a few there must have been some truth, as of the great king, Belinus, who had even invaded Gaul and conquered there. His sword was hidden, it was said, in the heart of a mighty oak tree, but none knew where the oak stood, unless it might be held among the Druid mysteries. And many another story and tradition of the Britons she related, not less curious. She knew the Gallic tongue and something of this she gave to me.

Even their art of war she taught me, and therein made me marvel. In her full veins pulsed only warrior blood and made itself so manifest that it seemed wondrous that in the same warm current ran all of tenderest womanhood and faithfulness. Indeed she was herself a warrior bold enough. Well do I bear in mind the first time she took me with her out upon the sands to teach me chariot driving, and how in the essay I swayed and tottered, guiding the horses bunglingly as we rushed along, her chariot in the lead, circling or overtopping and descending the steep dunes, or darting upward from the beach, to swerve and

rock along a hillside. Never in any storm at sea had I such strain to keep my feet beneath me, though in time I gained the needed reckless skill, to Goneril's vast approbation. Most solicitous had she been that I should excel in this, for the chariot was much relied upon in all the battles of the islanders. In fight, the warrior had with him a charioteer who drove against the enemy while the warrior, standing beside him, fought with javelin or spear or axe, or other weapon, as the ranks were neared or broken. When the *mêlée* became most furious the warrior, leaping from his place, would then engage on foot, the charioteer withdrawing from the fray a little to be in readiness in case of swift retreat or further charge on a massed body. Most formidable were these chariots, though only when they were afforded ground for evolution. In the close forest battles they were useless.

Winter came, sharp and keen and not unpleasant in this land of Britain with its climate tempered by a great sea current from the southwest, and, almost before it had begun, came my first service to King Cadwallon. There had come an uprising of a certain tribe whose overweening and ambitious chief sought, with the alliances he had made, to cast off the king's authority. Gerguint was summoned to attend with a force, which I was to accompany, which body was joined to others, and soon we met the rebels in the northwest forests. It was not a long campaign, but there were sharp skirmishes and, finally, a battle which was one of merit and wherein I had opportunity for the dealing of Viking blows when much they counted. It chanced, too, that I had occasion to save the life of Gerguint, who had risked it foolishly, charging ahead among

the savage clansmen and going down beneath a mass of them. Hard it was to hew a way to him and lift him to his feet again before they added other and more deadly spear-thrusts to the ones he had received, but I was well repaid. There came occasion for such gluttonous fighting, to shield ourselves until our own warriors reached us, as might have gorged a Baresark. Thor! but it was good cleaving! Back to back we stood, and I could ask no better shield than Gerguint. Fairly beholden proved he when the encounter ended with the night and the death of him who had been rebellious, and closer yet we became in comradeship. We swore blood-brotherhood, a thing which was excellent for me and later came to serve me in good stead. The return to London came, and there the king, to whom something had been related of my way in battle, had good words for me and made promise of some honour.

And why delay the story of what was the crowning of my desire and great and overmastering resolve? I asked that Goneril be made my wife, she proudly joining, and Gerguint did not fail me nor did the Lady Bera, for I had become as of the family. Then was the King Cadwallon sought, and, for a time, he hesitated. Counting all, I was but an adventurous stranger and of altogether alien blood. Yet, since that blood was noble and since I had sworn him fealty and had proved myself in battle, and, it may be, also because he felt the need of each strong arm, and, above all, because of the firm words of Gerguint, he at last gave his consent and had grace to give it finely.

There was a great attendance of the Kentish chieftains in the hall of Gerguint and of many from the court, and

there was our marriage, and ceremonies by the Druids—whose former power, as well as the length of some few of them, had been curtailed by good King Lud — and abundant feasting and drinking and music by the harpists; and so we two, thus joined before all, found happily what life may hold. The winter passed, and spring came, and in the bursting of stream and bud and song of bird there was not more warmth and glory than in ours. So passed the days. Then, as the summer neared, a pall fell on the land!

It was in the air, a vague unrest and dread. There was no frolicking beneath the moon in any of the scattered hamlets; the labourer in the field looked often toward the wood; the hunter moved with senses more alert; the wild beasts themselves one thought were seeking deeper harbourage; it was as if all nature were afraid; the very winds seemed whispering repeatedly, in fear, the one word — “Cæsar!”

The alarm had come across the sea from the Veneti. A little vessel of that friendly people had eluded the Roman ships patrolling the Gallic shores, and so reached Britain with news of recent movements of the devastator. He had, it seemed, been engaged in suppressing a revolt of the Treviri, who lay somewhere near the Rhine, but, meanwhile, had given orders that a great number of ships should be made in readiness for his army at a port called Itius, lying nearest to the shores of Britain. That he had it in mind to once more make a descent upon the islanders was, so the Veneti messengers declared, a thing assured. It was this fell news which had sped through Britain and had aroused the sudden dread of which I have already

spoken. What time the scathe might come no man could tell.

But if there were trembling throughout Britain there came also the courage which goes with desperation. Feuds were forgotten, as were boundaries, and there ensued wide summoning and a gathering of the many princes to consider swiftly what might be done in the impending struggle with the invader. It was agreed that Cadwallon as the chief among the southeastern rulers of the island, and in sort an overlord of some, should have the supreme command, and then the warriors came from every part, ranging themselves under their own leaders and forming, at last, a great force of charioteers and archers and spearmen and hosts of the wild skin-clad forest men, an army numerous as the leaves, but all in bands and with little discipline or order. So in and about the southern hills the great force hung. Then, one day, at noontime, there showed across the sea a mighty spread of sail. Cæsar would strike!

Eight hundred sail! What scores of thousands of the trained legionaries must they carry and what chance had an unordered host in an encounter on open even ground? It was decided by the leaders not to give battle at the shore, where the nature of the beach gave easy landing to the Romans, but rather to meet them on the high places, which had been fortified in a rude way by the felling of many trees in front of them. Here we awaited the attack.

Of that first desperate struggle against the veteran foe I can tell but vaguely, for I was in its midst, fighting as for my life and unseeing as to the general battle. Fiercely

we charged and drove among the enemy with our chariots, but could not shatter them. These were the trained slayers of the world, and when one rank wavered or was broken, another rose behind it and ever the whole pressed forward, killing as it came and irresistible against a force with no planned manner of cohesion. We were driven backward, though fighting stubbornly, and, finally, the enemy overwhelmed and seized the camp, and the Britons, leaving a host of dead, were driven into the forests. There was a kind of re-formation and then began the running fight of days, as Cæsar neared the capital. There were bloody stands and skirmishes and we cut off many of the Romans in the woods, but nothing could stay their firm advance.

My Goneril was in London, where I had thought her most secure in this time of great jeopardy, though stubbornly she had insisted on following me into the field. Gerguint had joined his brother Kentish princes, and together they had attacked the Roman camp left with the ships and had been beaten, and there had Gerguint been sorely wounded and, barely escaping, had been carried to the harbourage of his castle. The main body of the Britons was now within and about London, and Cadwallon was to make his last stand against the approaching army of Cæsar, which threatened the passage of a ford above the city. At this ford all must be decided.

There had been treachery. Mandubratius, crafty and wavering chief of the Trohantes, to save himself, had cast his lot with Cæsar. Androgeus, a chief in command in London itself, had turned against Cadwallon and was tampering with the conqueror; and all these things gave fear.

Yet we would make such stand as should be remembered long, and so all Cadwallon's forces were drawn up beside the ford to dispute its passage. The Romans came, their legions rolling to the shore and entering the waters boldly while our own massed armament stood awaiting them with eager weapons, a multitude looking upon us from the slope behind, even our women among them, as was the Briton's way. Then came the clash and struggle.

As the Romans neared the land, avoiding as best they could the sharpened stakes which had been set against them, their onrush was almost hidden by the cloud of spears and arrows falling upon them, and many were slain and carried downward by the glad current of the British river, but there was no checking them. Some struggled through and others followed as the first were slain, and soon the ranks had gained a footing, their front being lopped off as it came, but ever heaved forward by the tremendous mass behind. As in the surges of a growing storm, each succeeding wave crept further up the shore and the fight was soon on land. Though hate is in my heart for them, let none speak lightly of the dauntless courage or the stern hardihood and discipline of the Roman soldiers. Those ranks of iron pressed forward, though we raged among them with our chariots and met them manfully on foot with blows as fierce as their own and thrusts as deadly. But what could avail such ragged and open charge as made the wild Britons against an advancing wall which ever renewed itself as it was broken here and there? I, myself, fought side by side with chieftains of the Iceni, kinsmen of Goneril, with whom I had made friendship, and well they bore themselves.

High up the slope were the Romans now, and there was at the front much intermingling of the opposing forces. My charioteer had fallen, and the horses had been slain, and I, on foot, was making red my heavy Viking battle-axe, but in dire peril, for we were driven backward step by step and soon I was half surrounded and felt a wound or two and began to breathe too heavily. Then came to my ears a woman's cry. Circling downward and at one side from the slope above where were the onlooking multitude, had come Goneril, driven by grizzled Leir, her charioteer, and swinging to the front and very centre where she knew I would be found. There had been none who could restrain her. Mad with her fear for me, wild as a she-bear for her bayed mate, she had come storming on the battlefield, her dark hair streaming and the love flame in her eyes, seeking only to be with me, even in death together. And timely was her coming, for I had been beaten to my knee and was in sore strait. Surely the gods guided, for the chariot came to me through the mêlée as the wild bull through brush, and I was lifted to it by Leir's strong arm as, scarcely slackening in its course, it passed athwart the raging lines and so away toward safety. And, even at that moment, as Goneril bent down toward me tenderly, there came a Roman javelin which drove deep into her side and, as it lurched out and away with the chariot's surge, left, following it, a rush of her dear heart's blood, drenching her robe with red. Into my arms she sank, and so I held her until, flying, we reached the wood, then laid her gently down on the greensward.

What can I say of that awful, awaiting moment, or of what came? She was still alive, my glorious Briton girl.



“ I am weakening and dying. The Valkyrie
are circling in the sky ”

She smiled upon me and sought to reach up her arms about my neck, and could not; then sighed a little and there died! Then all things passed away, and I fell as dead beside her.

There is little more to tell of Britain. Cæsar had triumphed; London had fallen; the conqueror had wreaked his stern will upon the land; Cadwallon had yielded and had agreed to pay tribute, and Cæsar, taking hostages and many prisoners to be sold as slaves in Roman marts, had sailed away. For a hard four hundred years the Roman heel would press on Britain's neck. What was all this now to me! They had carried me and my dead Goneril away into the forest and, joined by certain of her kinsmen who had escaped, we took up our journey with my dead to the country of the Iceni, where they would bury her with the ceremonies befitting such a princess. All this we did, but I could speak no word. Men looked upon me with a sort of fear. My speech seemed lost, but came at last with the new swelling of the heart and the humming of the dark thoughts in my head. Nothing of Britain knew I longer. I was a Viking again with only Viking gods and Viking thoughts, and these transformed me. Cæsar had slain my Briton girl and, though it were forced or proffered, all the weregild of all the Roman world could bring no solace. Goneril was dead, and henceforth I lived but to bring death such as I might to every Roman! No oath of vengeance needed I to take on the white holy stone of Odin's priests. I sought Gerguint, still wounded in his castle, and was received as if the castle was my own, but abode there only as a silent and unheeding guest. Time passed and,

finally, I sought the little band of those I had hardened and taught to sail my shield-ship, and they joined me nothing loth, and in the darkness of a stormy night we crossed to the coast of Gaul, where I would fight against the Romans, for secret word came that there was nearing a head a vast uprising to cast off the Roman yoke.

Far to the south and west we laid our course, for I would hold it so well out at sea that we might avoid the Roman ships now haunting all the Gallic coast. Some days we sailed and, at last, having escaped them, made entrance at the mouth of a fair river called the Seine and sailed inland upon it until we reached an island where was a town, the capital of a partly maritime and trading people, the Parisii, who, because of their lack of strength, had allied themselves with the Senones, a more powerful tribe lying to the south of them. In this capital of the Parisii, or Paris, though called Lutetia by the Romans, were many who understood the Briton tongue; my small possession of Gallic also aided us somewhat and we were received with willingness and provided with food and a place for harbourage. The scene about us was of utmost tumult.

It was winter now and all Gaul was aflame with the hope of casting off the Roman power, in which great enterprise the various tribes had, after a council, ranged themselves under the leadership of Vercingetorix, a noble of the Arverni, and than of whom they could not have made wiser choice or one more likely to be followed by great outcome. Not only was he a man of courage and much skill in warfare, but also one who thought, not for himself alone, but calmly for the general good. Already had he a strong army in the field and was, after some

slight successes, seeking to check the advance of Cæsar upon Avaricum, the chief city of the Biturges, and one which should have been abandoned. Vercingetorix had pleaded with the Biturges that they should sacrifice it for the sake of the whole country, that it might not fall into the hands of the Romans and so give them stores and shelter until they might carry on the invasion to better advantage when spring should come. In this he was overruled or overpersuaded by his assembled leaders, for the Gauls had some of the weaknesses of the Britons, in that they were most difficult to control as a united body. So Cæsar was advancing, though but slowly, upon the city, and Vercingetorix was hanging near him with his forces, making sudden attacks upon his flanks and withdrawing swiftly and with much display of wise generalship as the need came. To Vercingetorix, then, came I at once, followed by my little handful of adventurous Britons who were most faithful and men of hardihood, for such I had selected for my shield-ship.

In this journey I attached myself to a small force led by one Critognatus, an Arvernian of note, who had come to Lutetia to encourage in the uprising and was now on his way to rejoin the Gallic army. Him I found a man of firmness of mind and of a fierce and unbounded patriotism, and he it was who promised to bring me personally to Vercingetorix.

Through many a devious forest path, across many a silent stream and over wide frozen marshes, we took our way and reached the Gallic camp on the evening of the third day. It made an amazing and curious sight, with its far extending fires beneath the trees of the dense wood

lighting the ways between hosts of rude shelters of boughs or sods or tents of skins until the lights but twinkled in the distance, for it was a huge force which had now gathered. Through a long way I was guided by Critognatus to see that I had audience. The tent of Vercingetorix stood near the centre of the camp and was somewhat larger than the others and had sentries at its door. I was taken within by Critognatus and my name and mission told to Vercingetorix, but I need have had no sponsor.

Most cordial was my greeting, though of a certain dignity, for Vercingetorix was one of a commanding and grave air, albeit his eyes gleamed brightly. There proved occasion for little speech. Of all that had occurred in Britain this wise leader had made himself acquainted and it so chanced that he knew my story well, and well could understand what impulse drove me now and what manner of service I might give. He placed me with the command of Critognatus, and, upon my asking, directed him to allow me, under my own leadership, a company of some hundred of a wild outlying clan of the Arverni, with whom I might adventure in my own way. Glad was I then!

What days and nights of brooding came to me! Ever I saw the tomb of Goneril or the fanes of my own gods! No puling gods of the weak races they, but war gods and gods of vengeance! Wild and savage and unfearing was my band of an outlandish mountain group to whom I had joined my few of Britons, and whom I now trained to more knowing warfare, but even they were scarcely equal to the fierceness and persistence of their leader. No

venturing foragers from the Roman camp were safe from our ambushes or sudden onslaught, for I hovered like a wolf about a fold, and many a legionary's blood made the snow brighter in my eyes. There came to me something of a name, and I was made welcome among the Gallic chieftains, stately in their glittering helmets and tunics and rich furs, and some of them most gallant men and good, but I could not be as One with them. I held myself aloof in a stern loneliness. They were not of me or mine. What says the Norsemen's rune :

“Gasps and gapes
When to the sea he comes
The eagle over old ocean;
So is a man
Who among many comes
And has no advocates.”

But little recked I of it all. I only sought and slew with my hardened following. Then, later, fell Avaricum, and Cæsar, his army fed and rested, turned toward Vercingetorix, who, after some well fought but unavailing battles, entrenched himself in the city of Alesia, where he awaited the issues. Alesia was a town of the Mandubii and one well fortified and of importance, founded anciently, it was related, as a trading-place of the Phœnicians. It lay upon the flat crest of a great hill, almost a mountain, and was protected on two sides by the rivers Lutosa and Osera. In the front the mountain sloped down into a plain a league in width, behind which, at some distance, rose other hills which surrounded the plain completely. The army of Vercingetorix now occupied the wide slope of the city's hill down to the plain and had

made before it a long deep trench and a stone wall the height of a man throughout. Upon the plain and nearer the hills were arrayed the Romans, who began at once a gigantic work of encircling fortifications such as I had never seen before and which gave me new comprehension of the utter inflexibility and hungry and all-conquering resolve of this great Cæsar. None other could have devised so vast a plan, and by no other army than his could it be executed. The inner circuit of this enclosing zone was a full ten miles in length and, gigantic as was the work, there was built in front of it a trench twenty feet in depth and of the same width, and, within this and nearer the fortifications, two other trenches each fifteen feet deep and wide, and filled with water let in from the river. All this was as a hindrance and protection against any sudden sally by the Gauls, of whom there were with Vercingetorix some hundred thousand. Not only this, but, at a distance and in the rear of Cæsar's army, was erected another and longer line of defense against the Gauls elsewhere, who were rallying in great numbers to come to Vercingetorix's assistance. I had somewhere heard a strange tale of a huge serpent which had coiled its vast length around an Afric village and engulfed the starving groups as they came forth in desperation, and the thought came to me again with this coiling of the awaiting serpent, Cæsar.

There were sharp conflicts as the work progressed, for we made frequent sallies from our wall, and there was one fight of the cavalry which caused great loss on both sides and might have ended still more hardly for the Romans had not Cæsar sent to their aid a great force of the Germans who were with him, and who fought solidly and well

together. Much it enraged me to behold these Germans, for they were somewhat of the same blood as my own.

Still grew the Roman fortifications and the whole thing was marvellous. Each Roman soldier, it seemed, was trained to every sort of labour and accustomed to it as to the march or battlefield. The army was made up of legions, containing from three thousand to six thousand men; the legion was divided into ten cohorts, the cohort into three maniples, and the maniple into two centuries, and each moved as if a part of one great being. Never before was army a machine so deadly, propelling itself in whole or in its smallest part as guided by a single mind. What Briton or Gallic force, however great, could cope with this!

And now came anxious days to Vercingetorix. The promised succour was delayed, and famine threatened. It was resolved to send away the helpless people of the Mandubii, but they could not pass the Romans. Very early in the siege Vercingetorix had fairly divided, man by man, all corn and cattle and other food, and this was near its end. A council of the leaders was now held at which was to be considered the best course to be taken, and at this council Critognatus spoke most eloquently, counselling a sally and a swift determining of the great issue, however fatal. Then came the news by messengers who had passed the enemy that our allies had come and that, under the leadership of Commius, they were about to attack the Romans in great force!

There was no faltering now! We must sally forth when our allies made their attack. The assault soon came, and for two days there were fierce charge and countercharge

and much slaughter, the Gauls outside assailing the farther Roman works as did we the inner ones. On the fourth day came the bloody climax.

There was at the extremity of the Romans' northern line a hill which could not easily be included in their works, and the outer Gauls had perceived this hill's advantage. They took from their main army sixty thousand of their best men, and these, under command of Vergasillaunus, passed round and seized the hill at night. At noon, it was decided, this great force should make its charge. Then all would join the battle and all knew that, before the night fell, there would come an end either of free Gaul or of the dreadful Cæsar!

My axe was red with Roman blood. My arm was wearied and my body sore that night, and through the brief hours of rest I snatched I slept but fitfully. That my sleep would fail me in the night to come I had no fear, for I knew in my heart what must befall. It did not daunt me. What warrior had done better? What says the Havamal of Odin:

“Cattle die,
Kindred die,
We ourselves also die;
But the fair fame
Never dies
Of one who deserves it!”

At noon the battle burst with utmost fury, as Vergasillaunus hurled his force upon the Romans and, almost at the same time, we from within assailed the ramparts. Nothing could stay us. The ditches were filled with clay and hurdles, the walls were mounted, their defenders slain, the turrets cleared, and we burst fairly through the

breached wall and struck our foes on even ground. What foaming struggle then, what vengeance sought for wrongs, what strokes for freedom! Should victory come to him, what mercy would he show, this harsh and treacherous Cæsar! Even I, who fought for my own hand and for my vengeance, could not but feel hate with the Gauls. For this man surely the gods must have a punishment. The noble Vercingetorix may grace his triumph, to be later murdered in a Roman dungeon; each Roman soldier may boast a Gallic slave; a servile populace may greet the conqueror madly, but certainly the evil day and evil end must come. May the daggers of false friends some time await him!

We raged ahead and slew, but ever came swinging into support the Roman legions in the way I knew so well from Britain. And no longer could we force them. Oh, for a thousand of my wild Jutlanders, Angle, Saxon, or Jute, I cared not, to hew a way with me into those solid ranks! There came a sudden rush and so close a press about me that I had not room for the swinging of my wet axe. The Roman short sword is most keen and, driven into a man's side and cleanly through him, he must reach the earth. The feet of a host of charging legionaries passed over and beyond me, and there came to my ears their distant shout of triumph.

The blood is flowing from my side and I am weakening and dying. The Valkyrie are circling in the sky. It is the end. How will they appear to me and how receive me, Odin, the all-father; Thor, the hammerer; Balder, the beautiful, and Freyja and all the great queens and warriors of the past? That must be as it may be. I have fought

well. And now even the gods are lost in mist. Strange visions are coming to me, visions of shining seas and the vast ocean, of warm, palm-clad lands and lands of ice and snow, of plains and forests and the dark mountain passes, of a thousand fierce encounters and of other and more gentle things. Above and beyond all, I see a creature, soft-furred of arm, dark-eyed and wild and beautiful of her kind, near to me in the lofty treetops and gazing at me gravely from between leaved branches!

THE END



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